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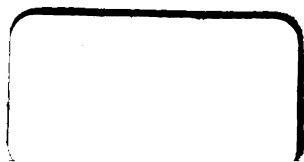
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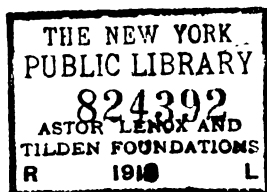
BY
FREDERIC PIERPONT LADD

AUTHOR OF
"THE LAST OF THE PURITANS"
"THE LADY OF SHENIPSIT"



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8100 Merrill Ave. N. W.

BOOK I
THE WAIF

AFTER

CHAPTER I

HIGH up in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where the land lies with no urban pall between itself and God, a semi-circle of azure-capped hills looked down, and caught the sight of David Duncan as he climbed steadily down the ladder from the newly shingled roof of his dwelling—and print shop. He carried the ladder around to the back of the building, returned to the front and looked up at the clean roof, and went into the print shop through a door that was wide; he stepped out again, in a moment, took another look at his roof, and then crossed to the railroad track, and strolled along the path by the shining rails. They would soon shine no longer, for it was nearly sundown. Mr. Duncan was preoccupied. His face—a face that you looked at twice because it was not ordinary—was as nearly sad as it ever came to be. High forehead, eyebrows inclined to be shaggy, and eyes very kindly; mouth rather humorous and decidedly sensitive, and the whole a countenance

thoughtful and philosophical. He was a big man. Seeing him now, strolling by the side of the railroad track here in the still mountain town you would have thought at once that he needed to be big. Big and patient. For the sadness of his face deepened as he walked. His story may be briefly told: he had come to Clarmont ten years before, and Mrs. Duncan had been in somewhat of an ill humor about it ever since. Mr. Duncan lived in his print shop, on the ground floor, where he had housekeeping arrangements, and Mrs. Duncan lived her life upstairs in the residence portion of the modest frame building which David had finished shingling. And the shingling had really seemed to make him more lonely. For now that 'twas done, Mrs. Duncan gave him no word, being in one of her very, very distant moods. She was fifty years old, and David had little hope that either the frequency or the intensity of such moods would diminish.

He was the loneliest man in Virginia.

As the sun went down behind a great peak on the Blue Ridge, and the rails ceased to shine, David heard the sound he had been hoping for. A through freight train was coming up the grade into Clarmont. He sat down on an old tie by the track, and waited. Steadily, powerfully, came the train. Puffing mightily, the heavy engines—there were two—took the increased grade at the out-

skirts of Clarmont and passed him by: but just as they passed, and as David rose from the tie, from one of the cabs leaned a grimy engineer and hailed Dave Duncan. Hailed him in the friendliest fashion in the world, as though he knew him well.

David felt less lonely. He walked home with a brisker step. He noted, as he was about to enter his printing establishment, that a child was vainly knocking on the office door of Doctor Murfree, a hundred yards across the track. David went all the way to the child, a very little girl with a large tin pail in which reposed six eggs.

She looked up at David with a pleased expression, and said, softly: "Ah reckon Doctor Murfree ain't home."

"I guess not," said David; "but maybe he'll come on the train to-night. He went away."

"Ah want t'sell him mah aigs—and have mah pay for mah other aigs."

"Oh," said David; "well, I guess you could sell 'em at the store."

"Doctor Murfree said bring him aigs every time 'Ah had aigs—he eats 'em raw." She spoke interestedly.

David smiled, and reached into his pocket. "I'll buy your eggs, Lena." He drew out a shining quarter.

She gravely placed them one by one in his big

hands, and he put them carefully in his capacious coat pockets. Lena's quarter jingled in the tin pail. . . .

Doctor Murfree failed to return that night. It was noon next day when the great hills looked down, and saw him as he descended from the midday train, arrived home from his hundred-mile trip to Richmond, Virginia.

. . . . The doctor was bearing a Gift for himself. As he traversed the open space between ramshackle depot and the Clarmont post-office, he was indubitably observed by the Citizenry.

. . . . Close kin to tragedy occurred when Doc suddenly set down his demijohn on the newly laid concrete walk in front of the United States post-office. Perhaps he made an error in calculating the distance to the sidewalk, or, possibly, the sidewalk rose up to meet the demijohn: the receptacle cracked on the spot, and the contents trickled from the broken glass through the wicker covering and bathed that amazing sidewalk. And Doc was speechless.

And townsman Ben Cook said, "Ain't that dreadful?"

And Eb. Harris, the postmaster, emitted a dry sob.

All the citizens looked agonized. And the very skies were less lovely, and more lonely.

Doc was hurt, but he played the man. Pulling

back the sleeves of his rusty black alpaca coat after the manner of a surgeon who is about to conduct a delicate operation, he lifted tenderly the ruins within the wicker and walked with firm and distinguished tread to the rear of Chesterfield Carter's law office, and deposited his erstwhile demijohn in the centre of a picturesquely variegated rubbish heap.

Doc turned sadly about, and lifting his long arms, silently invoked the skies: his tall figure seemed taller still, as he gazed upward, a look of pain upon his ruddy face. A beard possibly would have made his countenance non-committal, but the acuteness of Doctor Murfree's suffering was not hidden from his fellows.

Doc walked slowly along the lane by the railroad track, and was seen to enter his little office in the distance, before Eb. Harris, the postmaster, left the citizenry grouped outside the post-office and entered to sort the noon mail.

Mr. Harris did not distribute the mail with his usual accuracy. He put an important letter for Doctor Lawrence Murfree bearing a Richmond postmark into box 38, instead of box 58. Box 38 belonged to an outlying farmer who often did not get his mail for a week.

Dr. Murfree's trip to Richmond had been emotional. Exaltation had characterized his three-day stay. Indeed, there had been one incident

which had touched his soul: on the evening of his first day he had chanced to wander into a little chapel where a special meeting was being held for the purpose of finding a home for a French boy eleven years old who had been orphaned by the war. The boy, a wan little fellow with great dark eyes, was present, and appeared to feel his position keenly. Yet he bore himself with a dignity and a grace wonderful to see, as the young rector unfolded his tragically simple story. Victor Daudet was the son of a soldier of France who had fallen with a smile turned toward the enemy at Verdun. Verdun, name that thrills the world. Verdun, where tens of thousands had given their all to teach the nations of the earth that there is a might of soul and a power of devotion greater and stronger than the shock of massed Efficiency.

Victor was the last child of a family that had consisted of father, mother, and three children. His child eyes had seen their home despoiled by the Kaiser's men, and his mother strangely dead a day after: his brother older than he, and his sister younger, both delicate children, in a short month had died, when Lucile Darby, an American Red Cross nurse, brought him to America: Miss Darby, broken in health from a year's duty in France, had begged for Victor; that she might give him a home across the sea.

Miss Lucile came back to Virginia in May with

Victor: now it was November, and she was dead. She had been one of their little church; the rector said all when he told them that Victor was twice orphaned.

Dr. Murfree wept. So profoundly moved was he that he rose to his commanding height, there in the little chapel, and declared that, if they would give to him the boy, he would honor the trust as sacred. Forgetting, perhaps, that his wife had left him some three years before, the Doctor painted a beautiful picture of his quiet home and sweet-faced, childless wife in the glorious Blue Ridge. He would take this boy to her; they would give him home, happiness, education and love. . . .

You can see the picture of the Doctor, as the Doctor finished painting such a picture: the rector deeply moved; some of the older and all of the younger ladies in tearful approbation of the Doctor; the plain citizen at whose humble home Victor had been cared for since Miss Darby's death notably touched.

There was one dear old lady who, as she joined the little group about the tall Doctor, thought she detected the odor of ardent spirits, but she convinced herself that it was ether, or some aroma proper to be identified with a Physician. . . .

Charming in manner, perfect in poise, great in sympathy, Doctor Lawrence Murfree, presenting

his card, his heart and his home, was commended; and it was promised that Victor Daudet should be sent to him at Clarmont. He lifted the silent child to his lofty shoulders, kissed him, set him down, fervently bade adieu to the rector and the ladies, and departed from the chapel. . . .

Few pleasures entered the monotonous life of Doc Murfree in the quiet mountain town of his abode, and he made so much of the rest of his stay in Richmond, that he forgot about Victor Daudet. When the Doctor arrived at Clarmont he had no more recollection of the boy than as though Victor, instead of Victor's father, had fallen at Verdun.

The letter from the rector in Richmond announcing that the waif would reach Clarmont on that night's train, lay in box 38 at the post-office.

Dr. Lawrence Murfree, during all the rest of that long afternoon, in his office across the railroad track from David Duncan's print shop, slept; and if he dreamed, dreamed of the contemptible behavior of the sidewalk in front of the post-office rather than of his own generous promise.

When a little boy with a little bundle got out of the night train at Clarmont, there was nobody to meet him, and he didn't know where to go.

CHAPTER II

CHESTERFIELD CARTER was busily striking his typewriter keys, composing a tight contract for an orchard owner who desired to be secured against a deflection of business honor on the part of an apple shipper. The little old law office on the ground floor of the Clarmont "Exchange" was littered and dusty, but not dim; over Attorney Carter's capable shoulders and cleanly shaven physiognomy a 32-candle-power incandescent glowed effulgently, shedding its rays to the cobwebs in the remotest corners of the office. It showed, in pleasing clearness, every line which Mr. Carter's face had acquired in twenty-nine canny and crowded years. His features were those of the high type of Virginian. His ruddy complexion, his fast flying fingers, his good head, were pictured as though set in a frame for you to look upon:—action, breeding, character, business, the time and the place.

You see him finish the last sheet and yank it

dexterously from his typewriter, as he glances quickly toward his half-open office door because a little figure is pushing it wide open.

Victor Daudet bowed: "I knocked on the door, monsieur," said the little fellow; "you have not heard. Please pardon that I should enter."

"Come in, Son! What it is?"

"It is," said little Victor, catching at the words as strangely like an idiom of his own—"it is that I have hungry—it is that I am here, and that I do not know where is the gentleman who was not at the dee-pot when I am arrived."

Chesterfield Carter sprang from his chair, led Victor to it in a trice, put him in it, sat on the desk, looked down into the quivering little face, and said, in a tone that rang with friendliness: "Colonel, I don't get you, but you're welcome as the flowers in May—what's your name, home address——"

"I have not a home—I now am in America—my home was France. For France my Father died. My name is Victor Daudet." The words were simply spoken; the child was not aware that they stated his case and told his history. The agile mind of Chesterfield Carter ran down half a dozen clues at once—"Came in on the train—where from?—Richmond.—Who sent you?—Some committee? Who to?—*Me?*—Colonel, you're cold—here, put my coat around you!"

Carter's coat was off his shoulders, and he wrapped the small boy in it and smiled—"Now!—*No home*—That won't do. Let's converse: you say some more, and I'll hear what you say."

Victor told the big-shouldered man: he told him of France, war, death; of Lucile Darby, America, Richmond, Miss Lucile's death. He told him of the meeting at the chapel (which had made an indelible impression upon his mind) and he explained what the tall man with the high shoulders and the very red face had said at the meeting, and how he had taken the train in Richmond and ridden a long time, to come to see him and to have a home with him.

Carter had listened to Victor's recital with glistening eyes; now he brushed away a tear before anybody could have told that it was a tear; he jumped from his desk with characteristic vehemence, and paced the floor twice: for lack of anything better to say at the particular instant, he remarked, pausing in front of the boy: "You get away with the English language right well, Son,—who taught you?"

"Miss Darby—an' I was in a school until she——"

"I'm on!" suddenly cried Chesterfield Carter—"I'm on!" And he seated himself on the desk and began swinging his legs nervously. "The nobleman of nature who breezed into the chapel

was none other than our passionate friend Dr. Lawrence Murfree, every light burning, responsible as a goat, dying to make handsome promises, which is his specialty, and willing to gamble his more or less immortal soul for the sake of flashing a note bearing the magic figures one million, and not worth one hurrah on a show-down! Promised you a home with a gold fence around it."

"Yes, but also, No," said Victor, with a wan little smile—"It was the Doctor Murfree, I know the name, but his home he said had roses o'er the door, an' his wife was a lady with face sad an' sweet——"

"Shades of the Angels!"

The boy looked up into Carter's face, which was a study; a greater number of emotions could hardly have been written on a human countenance. Pity, merriment, scorn, regret, contempt, quizzical humor, sympathy, determination and Christian good-will were there.

Carter rapidly buttoned his coat about the boy from neck to heels, tucked up the sleeves, took Victor's little hand, and they went out into the chill night. Across the dark square of the town he led him, and down the railroad track to the print shop of David Duncan.

CHAPTER III

You know what a fine fire old, dry shingles make. David Duncan had stuffed his cook stove in the room back of his business apartment full of them, and was cooking scrambled eggs and bacon. His reading glasses were poised accurately on his broad forehead, as he watched the bacon sizzle, when he heard Chesterfield Carter's knock. David stepped through, and opened the front door.

"I have the honor to present Mr. Victor Daudet, whose father was a soldier of France," said Carter; "Mr. Duncan, we have with us a boy who is hungry. I smell edibles. May we be seated?" It was sudden, and somewhat incomprehensible, but David was further informed in a rapidly flowing succession of sentences. He lost no time in playing the host.

Victor was soon seated on a high stool at the broad counter, and hot eggs, deliciously scrambled with bacon as crisp and tender as the new lettuce

with which David garnished his plate were before his hungry eyes. David forgot about himself. (He often did that.)

Victor looked up into the kindly eyes, and then at Chesterfield Carter's face, which he had studied with a puzzled, affectionate satisfaction from time to time. Victor broke bread, ate a little piece and then looked steadily at David Duncan. David smiled. A slow, deep, growing smile that made his countenance radiant. Victor involuntarily reached forth his two hands to him: "I thank you, monsieur!" David took the boy from the high stool, disengaged him from Carter's coat and led him to his own big easy chair close by the open door into the back room, whence the grateful warmth was streaming forth.

"You just rest yourself," said David. "Chester, here's your coat."

Carter donned his coat and pulled down the sleeves. "Mr. Duncan, we owe a certain duty to our fellow townsman, Doc Murfree. The chances are that he is reasonably sober by now, and may enlighten us. Shall I try him?"

"I guess you'd better go over to his office, and see how he is. Let the Doctor come back with you if he wants to come;—and if he's in proper condition to see a first-class boy!"

Carter knocked loudly on Doc Murfree's office door, not more than four minutes later.

"Come in," said a plaintive voice.

"Greetings, Doctor!"

Doc Murfree rose without enthusiasm from his deep chair, and stretched forth a lifeless hand to Carter. "Ches, I wish I knew where I could get a quart. I need it."

The Doctor looked disconsolate and played out. Carter's keen eyes were upon him.

"Hard luck, Doc. I saw you sustain a loss in front of the post-office this noon. Need a bracer, eh? Accept my sympathy, but I have no liquor. Had a topnotch time in Richmond, didn't you, Doctor?"

"Aw, sit down, Ches, old boy, believe me, I *did* have a trip."

"And," said Carter, "you went into some sort of a deal to provide a home for a French orphan boy. The boy is here. He's over at Dave Duncan's." Doc Murfree passed his hand over his lips—they were rather thick lips; he gazed with a lustreless look in his eyes—they were rather roving eyes, and remarked, lazily: "This one of your jokes, Ches?"

"No, I reckon it's one of yours. Your memory's probably at a low ebb. I'll freshen it up, if you'll allow me. A French orphan boy named Victor Daudet says you attended a meeting at a church in Richmond and told them you wished to give him a home. You told 'em to send him

to Clarmont, and you'd do the rest—or words to that effect. Doc, don't you remember attending that meeting?"

Dr. Murfree passed his hand through a mass of wavy black hair, and over his forehead; it was a forehead that might well have been benevolent. He got out of his chair, and raised himself to the full stature of what might have been a man; his face darkened, lighted; he showed his teeth in a strange smile. The deep cleft in his chin gave him a sinister look. "By —, Ches, I believe I do remember some meeting—I was touched, Ches; I was deeply touched, moved, and thrilled, suh. It was a remarkable occasion—but, Ches, of course *I* didn't promise a home for any orphan—how could I? All I got is this d—d little shack of an office, and my bed in the back room,—and the bed is, so to speak, approximately worn out, Ches,—there's a mistake. Somebody made a mistake."

"I reckon you're that party, Doctor. But the boy is here. I suggest you walk across to Dave's with me, and see the boy, and we'll discuss the matter."

Murfree saw no way out. "Certainly, Ches. Certainly. Anything in this world I can do, I am at your service."

The doctor nervously lighted a second cigarette, pulled himself together, and followed Chesterfield

Carter out of the door and across the railroad track.

There was a curious look upon little Victor's face, when he saw the doctor. He shrugged his shoulders, and said to David Duncan, "It is he."

A lesser man than Doc Murfree might have been confounded. "Gentlemen, I certainly owe you an apology for my lapse of memory in regard to this lovable little fellow. I can only say that I am not now less moved by his plight than upon the pathetic occasion when he first came under my observation. I have no doubt, none whatever"—Doc raised his hands to Heaven—"that it was Providential. Would you, and do you not agree with me, that in this fair and glorious land of ours there should be found a home, shelter, care and love for this little stranger from brave France?"

David Duncan spoke: "Very majestic, Sir. Have a seat, and take it easy."

The Doctor reclined in a big chair. Mr. Carter lighted a cigar, and looked at him. "Doctor, you, I am sure, would be delighted to explain to a mass meeting of our citizens of Clarмонт what beautiful emotions you experienced when you first saw the little stranger from France. Incidentally, you could elucidate as to how you assured the committee in Richmond that he would find a home in Clarмонт. And then, Doc, you could put it up

to our people to provide the home. What do you say to a mass meeting tomorrow night?"

The Doctor gazed down at his feet, and shifted one of them.

David Duncan looked at Victor, and saw proud tears in the child's eyes.

Ches Carter looked at David. "Mr. Duncan——"

"I guess not," said David; "the boy's got a home without going any further."

CHAPTER IV

"But, monsieur, that is your bed," said Victor, when he had undressed, and David showed him where he was to sleep.

" 'Tis my friend's bed," said David—"you're my friend."

The little fellow gazed up into the big face with a look of love. David bent down, and clasped the warm little body—raised him on high in his great arms—"You say your prayers in bed, 'cause it's cold!"

The little arms clung.

David kissed a wan cheek, and tucked him in. "Good night!"

"But where shall you sleep?" asked Victor.

"My big bunk under the counter in the other room," explained David, "and I won't shut the door. You just go to sleep, now."

"But the—— Good night, monsieur!"

Victor watched the bar of light shining through the door, when David left him. It seemed to him

that he had arrived at the end of the world. . . . But David Duncan was there. . . . He wanted both to pray and to sing; to cry and to laugh, and to—to sleep.

He slept.

In the morning, sunrise streamed across Victor's face, and he awoke. Mr. Duncan was moving about getting breakfast. David brought him some fresh water in a shiny tin basin, and a clean towel, and they two together untied Victor's little bundle, and Victor dressed himself with care. The big man didn't say much at breakfast. Just as they were through, Victor noticed that some one upstairs was knocking sharply on the floor over their heads.

Mr. Duncan unbolted a door which gave into an entry and stairway, and Victor heard him go up the stairs.

He was gone a long time.

David returned with a placid look on his face:—a relieved look. "Victor," he said, "I'm a printer. I set up type, and print things—letter heads, and labels, and auction bills and advertisements and such like. In fact, I'm a job printer. That black thing in the front room is my printing press: let's go look at it."

And David explained more fully as he showed Victor about the shop.

"Now, my wife, Mrs. Duncan," remarked David

gravely, "she lives upstairs, and she sensed that somebody was here with me, and she wants to know about you. I told her you were a friend of mine that's going to be my assistant here in the shop—learn to set type, and help print, and so on. How would you like that?"

"Yes, sir, I would like to be with you."

"Now Mrs. Duncan—she wants to see you. Would you like to see Mrs. Duncan?"

Victor looked up into the big face. "Yes, monsieur."

They went upstairs.

Victor never forgot his first interview with Mrs. Duncan. David called her Mildred. She had a small brown mole on the left hand side of her nose. It was a thin, sharp nose. Her hair was almost black, and was done up in a queer bob. She had a high sounding voice: to Victor it seemed like the music scale as she spoke. She asked him many questions, very fast. She smiled at him once. She did not smile at David at all. When she had done asking him questions, she looked out of the window, and began tapping her foot on the floor.

David said, "I guess we'll go downstairs, Mildred."

"Are you going to send the child to school?" she asked. The question came, Victor thought, as though it were shot out of a gun.

"Why, certainly, Mildred. He can learn considerable at school that'll make him all the more valuable to me."

"I can't see what you want of an apprentice eleven years old! It's the craziest thing you ever did, anyway!"

"Mildred!"

"Well?"

"That boy is *my* boy!"

She made no answer.

"Can't he be your boy, too?"

For answer, she rose quickly, and before Victor knew it had him in her arms. Her cheek was against his cheek. Her cheek was wet.

Then she pushed him gently away; she turned to David. "He can come upstairs, sometimes. I'll look after his clothes." She walked to the window, with an odd, swaying motion.

David and Victor went downstairs. He did not see her again for several days.

Clarmont and its dwellers became slightly known to Victor in the course of the next week. There were perhaps half a dozen callers a day at the print shop, and the child studied their faces and listened to their speech, which was smooth sounding. He asked David, one day, why they always talked about apples. "Because," said

David, "this is a great apple country. All the men own apple trees."

"But, monsieur," said the child, "I should think it was that the apple trees owned the men."

David's face lighted.

"Do you print for them about the apples and the trees?" asked the child.

David explained business letter heads, and labels.

Clarmont was not an old Virginia town, but a community of fruit growers, traders and tradesmen. The people were kindly; the life was the unordered, materialistic life of the new Southern town of its type. Coming into such a place and such an atmosphere from intensely civilized France; coming from a home where his upbringing until the war had been a matter of care, method, orderliness and fine intelligence, it was a tremendous contrast.

Yet David Duncan was a wonderful compensation. David and Chesterfield Carter. Victor spent many hours, at the behest of Mr. Carter, sitting in the law office watching the people who came and went; and especially watching Carter, whom he liked. Mr. Carter was a bachelor, and lived at the hotel; once he took Victor to dinner with him.

Doc Murfree had his meals at the hotel, and was there. He spoke to Victor very politely, and

tenderly; and the child was perfectly aware that it meant nothing. After dinner Doc Murfree called at the law office, and attempted to negotiate a loan of some money. Mr. Carter could not oblige.

Dr. Lawrence Murfree was this kind of a man: he counted any man his friend whom he could induce to lend him money or extend him credit or do him a favor, and all the rest of the world an impolite and worthless lot. Doc Murfree had exceedingly suave manners when he had a point to gain, a truly eloquent tongue when he would glorify himself, and a heart as empty as a brass kettle upside down if you needed anything from him. Victor understood very well the characterization which Mr. Carter thought best to apply.

David Duncan appeared to be in no hurry for Victor to learn the mysteries of typesetting. The big man said: "Well, you run around in the sunshine, and get to feeling good, and next week we'll send you to school."

CHAPTER V.

Nothing now seemed so strange to Victor as that he should once have been a little boy in France with a pretty mother, a tall father who had a black beard and was very strong, and used often to embrace his mother, and hold long conversations with her; and then went away to war: the day he went, Victor remembered so well! He kissed the children—Victor, and his brother, and his sister; and his mother: and she looked at his father with great eyes, and said, “It is for France!”

All that had happened from then until now seemed like a dream, a fast moving, astonishing dream. . . . So terrible that it must be a dream.

But he was awake. He was in America, in a place where the hills were the highest he had ever seen, where only the skies were like the skies of France, with a soft, deep blue.

How strange it was that, although David Duncan had a wife, his wife did not see him for days

at a time, and lived upstairs; and when she did see him spoke to him or not, as she happened to feel. And they had no children.

He was David Duncan's friend, because David told him so; and because of it he sometimes, at night, wanted to cry, he was so glad. . . .

On Sunday, he and David went for a walk far down the railroad track, after dinner. Mr. Duncan told him he was to go to school the next day, and that if he would pay attention and study he could get ready to become a man such as his father and his mother would like to know he was—"For they'll know, Victor; they'll know," said David; in a quiet, deep way he spoke, and looked up into the skies that were over the highest of the high hills, and there was a shining light in Mr. Duncan's eyes that made Victor take his big hand and press it with all his might; and David took the boy in his arms.

That night Mrs. Duncan tapped on the floor, and David went upstairs, and was gone only a minute, and came back with a queer look on his face, and said, "She wants to see you, Victor."

Victor supposed Mr. Duncan was to go upstairs with him. But David said, "You go. She wants to see you without me."

When Victor tapped at her door, and entered, she was sitting in a rocking chair beside a table with a lamp on it. She held up from her lap

some garments, and said, "Here are two shirts I made for you. They are eleven-year-old pattern. I guess they will fit you. You can wear the blue and white one to school tomorrow."

Victor thanked her, and took the shirts she was holding out to him. She did not ask him to sit down: she said, "Don't learn to swear and throw stones, at school."

"No, madame."

"Good night."

"Good night, madame."

He closed the door after him as softly as he could.

Through America you will find, conscientiously laboring as few men have the gift or the patience to do, an army of women who are only school-teachers. Handicapped by the materialism of their communities, unappreciated by the majority of those whose children they teach, their efforts often set at naught because of home influences that are careless, or coarse, yet the best of these teachers love, and labor on.

The teacher to whom David Duncan committed Victor when he took him to the bare, square, brick school building on a hill that looked to the skies, was Miss Judith Madison.

Sympathy shone in her dark eyes, as she looked from the kindly face of the big man into the up-

turned eager eyes of the little boy; she took Victor's hand, and looked again at David, and said, with a smile, " 'Every man has two countries—France, and his own.' "

"Miss Madison, I won't try to thank you for what you are going to do for our boy from France—I guess *he'll* thank you."

She placed Victor at a little desk, and sat down beside him, and the boy felt a quick thrill of happiness . . . her mouth was sweet; in her eyes and her voice was a surety of love and interest that no child with a yearning heart could fail to understand.

She asked Victor about his studies; if he liked fractions, if he liked reading, if he knew something of the history of America—and if he knew that France was America's greatest friend in days of old.

By the time the first bell was ringing they were well acquainted. She looked up at David, and said, "Yes, he'll be in my own room—I have from the seventh grade on."

Children began coming into the room. David said goodbye to Victor and to Miss Madison.

A new boy's first day at school sometimes marks his career. A boy a year or two older than Victor, named Henry Geiger, took an early interest in Victor. Henry was the eldest son of John Geiger, a thrifty orchard owner who ruled his family with

a hand of iron, and whose ambition for his children as for himself was that they should be richer, bigger, stronger, and more important than all others.

Henry Geiger was sturdy, with fat, strong hands; he possessed strange hair. An enemy child had once called it "bristly red hay." It probably was not red, but surely was open to suspicion: his face was red, though; a fierce brick color, and round as a moon. . . .

The man in the moon is represented to us as a laughing, a jovial personality. Victor detected nothing jovial in Henry's moon face, as he observed him scowl at him from time to time the first hour of school. When the arithmetic class was called, Victor was sent to the blackboard, where he rapidly worked a series of fractions which was given him by a method Henry never had heard of. Though the result was right, Henry promptly raised his hand, and became disputatious. Miss Madison explained that Victor's work was quite correct. Other scholars laughed, which displeased Henry not a little; . . . he thought about the matter more or less deeply until recess, when he followed Victor very closely through the door with the crowd of boys . . . and followed still more closely, stepping upon Victor's heels with his stubby shoes all the way across the school yard to the boys' side. . . . The other

boys were interested in Henry's tactics. . . .

"What is that name of yours?" he demanded of Victor, as Victor suddenly faced him.

"Victor Daudet."

Henry laughed scornfully: "Ho, Ho!—Do! Do—Do—Do—Do—day!" Henry pronounced the Do like the dough you make bread of:—he seemed to find it utterly ludicrous. He affected to be surprised that any boy could have such a name. His ridicule mounted, and he pranced back and forth singing the doleful refrain—"Do, Do, Do, Do, Do—day—a name of foolishness!"

As he finished this arraignment of Victor, Henry shook his fist threateningly in the smaller boy's face, fist emphasis being his idea of particular conclusiveness.

Something about Victor's heart tightened, he said, "Daudet is my name because it was my father's name. He was a soldier for France."

"Your father he was then a fool, he——"

Victor lost himself, and young Geiger was flat on his back with a bleeding nose which felt as though it had been driven through his face; a stunned little animal—but only for a moment. . . . He grasped Victor's leg, and bit. The two were a whirl of dust and dirt. Victor saw red, red. . . . Geiger tried to crush Victor, to choke him . . . he was the stronger of the two, but not so quick—blow after blow was rained upon him until he

was half blinded—he could not keep hold of Victor's hair and ears with his hands, could not get his throat, and when he kicked, he kicked astray; Victor broke from him and launched a blow that rattled his teeth—he kicked again—and felt his foot strike into his enemy. Victor lay on the ground before him—still. Henry yelled, and seized a stone, to bring it down upon Victor's head. . . .

Henry was suddenly spun around in mid air, and deposited in a heap beside the school fence with a cuff from a man's open hand that made him see every star that has never been counted.

CHAPTER VI

THE next that Henry knew, he heard the voice of his father. From his swollen eyes, Henry saw Chesterfield Carter and his father. Miss Madison he dimly saw; it was all a topsy-turvy picture, yet he wondered that Teacher was sitting on the ground—Victor raised his head from her lap, and stood up—John Geiger was shouting in Carter's face—Henry staggered to his feet beside the fence, and felt a new accession of strength—and a fine idea came to him; . . . he saw Victor walking, now—John Geiger was shaking his fist in Chesterfield Carter's face—that was good. . . . Miss Madison was watching them, her face scarlet. Everybody was watching them. . . . Henry wrenched free a loose picket from the fence, and suddenly rushed at Victor, who was going toward the school pump.

The French boy's brain worked quickly. As Henry swung the fence picket at him with all his might, Victor dropped, and tripped his adversary.

Henry's head struck the ground . . . he could not get up . . . he was sick. All was black. . . . And now it was not so black, and he heard his father shouting so loudly that the sound made him try to see . . . that instant he saw his father raise his great fist and hurl it at the face of Chesterfield Carter. Carter stepped lithely aside, and upper-cut Geiger cleanly, perfectly. The burly man lay on the ground, at rest . . . his father, . . . yes, his father lay on the ground, and Henry Geiger, lying on the ground, knew nothing sanely. The world had changed.

Carter and Miss Madison conferred a brief moment and he lifted his hat; he led Victor to his automobile, at the school gate, and they went away. Miss Madison, and the other teachers, and the school children went into the school building.

Henry Geiger saw that his father was sitting up. Next, he got up from the ground, and stood, and his eye fell upon Henry; Henry stood up. The sky was filled with floating specks of black; his father took him by the hand, and they went home.

Victor told Mr. Carter why he had fought, as they sped through town in Carter's machine.

"Tell, please, Monsieur Duncan," said Victor, as the big man appeared in the doorway of the shop, an inquiring expression on his untenance

which grew as he noted Victor's torn clothes and scratched face.

"Mr. Duncan," said Carter, in his vehement way, "John Geiger's boy Henry insulted the ancestry of Victor—I judge by the licking he got that Victor's ancestry was A-1."

"Well, well!"

"Victor," continued Carter, "is doing nicely, we thank you; the affair was illuminating. It's an established fact that you can't slur the nativity of a Thoroughbred and get but one answer. I wish you'd seen young Geiger's face!" concluded Carter; "it was decorated and embellished."

"Well, well!" repeated David—"I declare!" He placed his hand soothingly on Victor's shoulder, and noticed that the little chap was all of a tremble.

"There, there, Victor—I guess you did exactly right. I know you did right—because, a bully has to be whipped—that's necessary, for the sake of other folks. Victor, you made a good fight!"

Victor's shoulders relaxed—he looked up into David's face with a glad light in his eyes—"Monsieur Carter have also made a good fight!"

"Eh?" queried Duncan, turning to Carter.

That gentleman flicked an ash from the cigar he had lighted. "I'll explain—let's sit down."

The three were seated on the broad bench in the sunshine.

"Geiger came to my office about ten this morning and asked me to take him up to the Hunter property to look over the lines. Geiger takes no chances when he's buying, being well grounded in the *Caveat Emptor* principle—you follow me?"

"Yes."

"We were going by the schoolyard in my machine at recess time, it so happened. Young Geiger had knocked the wind out of Victor with a sportsmanlike kick in the stomach and was about to kill him with a rock when I had the good luck to stop it. I cuffed young Geiger, which made Geiger Senior offensive, and he tried to punch me. Coincidentally he made a statement with respect to me which would have been true if I hadn't knocked him down.—Do you get me?"

"Yes," said David, "I guess I do."

"Sorry it happened, Mr. Duncan, but it'll only be a two days' wonder in town—better let Victor go to school as usual tomorrow. I'll take it on myself to see Geiger, and have an understanding for the future. Victor is entitled to his rights. I know Geiger. He's pig-headed, and has a lot of money; and thinks he owns the town; but in this case I reckon I can show him."

David raised his big form from the bench; looked down at little Victor with a smile; gazed into Carter's face with such a look as seals a

friendship. "You do," he said. "You do, and I'll remember it a long while."

David thoughtfully rubbed a smear of ink on one of his big arms, and slowly pulled down the sleeve.

Carter looked keenly at him, an abiding respect in his eyes. "Mr. Duncan, the night Victor struck this town and I brought him to you, I brought him because I knew it was the one place he'd be treated well, and with no insinuations as to who would pay for it. I'm going to help you and Victor."

CHAPTER VII

CARTER's object in interviewing Geiger was to allow him to commit himself to a wrong stand, if he pleased. He did not. He received his caller in almost neighborly fashion, took him into his "office," a solidly furnished room off the family dining room, closed the door upon his placid-faced wife and a noisy lot of children, and remarked, "I was hasty, Mr. Carter. We shall not be hasty now. I have thought about it."

Carter looked at him searchingly. "Glad to have you take that view of it, Mr. Geiger. I've made inquiries, and I find your boy Henry was wrong. If I hadn't stopped him he might have killed Victor—he didn't know what he was doing."

A queer look came into Geiger's red-rimmed eyes. "I know. I have licked Henry. If he fights again, I shall lick him more. We shall continue business the same as usual, you and me," he concluded. ✓

"Nothing to prevent," said Carter; "come around in the morning, if you like, and we'll go out and look over those boundaries. It's supposed to be about a hundred acre proposition——"

"Fifty acres now in trees already," interrupted Geiger.

Carter rose. Geiger let him out of the office onto the broad veranda by the driveway, and Carter was off in his machine.

Mr. Geiger sat in his chair, after he had gone, nursing his jaw. It was a heavy jaw, and it belonged to a ruthless man, who loved neither Carter, nor young Victor, nor anything that crossed his prosperous path. It was cheaper to use Carter's services, however, than to hire a Charlottesville lawyer. It was better to whip Henry than to raise antagonism to himself as a member of the Clarmont school board and leading citizen. Geiger was no fool. There would be other ways to get even with that boy Victor.

It was a night of interviews.

Judith Madison, reading in her little sitting room where she boarded at Miss Letty Brown's, was informed that Mr. Carter was calling. Miss Madison did not so much as rearrange a strand of her luxuriant hair before she received him.

Seated on the opposite side of her reading table,

Carter plunged into his subject: "Just came from Geiger's, Miss Madison. It's all right. I thought you'd like to know. Geiger is smart enough to see that he can't afford to go on record when wrong, and that his boy was exactly wrong."

"If I'd only seen him sooner! What a little beast he was!"

"Antagonism by instinct, perhaps—Tenton versus Gaul. But this is a neutral country."

"Who, with sense or with soul, could be neutral?" queried Miss Madison.

Carter looked at her pretty cheeks and her lustrous eyes.

"France is a wonderful country," he commented.

"I'll stand for Victor's rights," Miss Madison said; "I'll stand for them against all the Geigers in Christendom."

"I believe I can assure you, Miss Madison, that there will be no more fistic encounters, at least. Henry does what his father says, I judge; and his father has punished him for fighting. I reckon that settles it."

"I want to thank you for what you did, today."

"Nothing," said Carter—"who wouldn't?"

Miss Madison smiled reminiscently. "I trust you didn't injure Mr. Geiger?"

"You can't hurt a steam road roller."

Carter picked up the book Miss Madison had been reading. "Read much? Find it dull in Clarmont?"

"It's different from going to college."

"Randolph-Macon, Women's, weren't you?"

"Yes—you're a Virginia man, aren't you?"

College folk readily find common interests. Carter had spent six years of his life at the University—four Academic and two Law—and was able to tell Miss Madison much that she wished to hear. As she listened, she wondered why Chesterfield Carter had settled in a place like Clarmont. It came out, with amazing frankness, just before he left her that evening. "I hadn't a cent in the world when I'd finished in Law," he said. "I was broke, and the family wasn't affluent.—I thought I saw an opening here where a man could starve respectably until he grew up with the town."

Miss Madison laughed: "I know the feeling—Virginians are used to it."

His eyes lighted. "Well, good bye, Miss Madison. I hope I may see you again."

"Of course," she answered.

"I'll be glad to take you to Charlottesville in my machine some Saturday soon, if you'll go—will you?"

"Thank you, I reckon so," she said, with a pleased look.

David Duncan liked to have big things about him. As he jumped out of his car, Chesterfield Carter, glancing through the window in the front of the print shop, at least seven feet square, saw David with his big gray cat Bemus on his knee. Man was stroking cat. Victor was in a big chair beside them. Seated in lordly fashion facing them was Doc Murfree.

“The Sponge!” ejaculated Carter—“The Sponge! He came over to see if he could get a chance to examine Victor for an injury in the school fight, and collect a fee from David!”

That was it. Doc Murfree had his tenderest gaze upon Victor, and reached over to place his hand on him at the moment Carter came in. The boy drew back slightly. “Sit down, Mr. Carter,” said David, and gave him his own big chair.

“Thank you—keep your seat. Hello, Victor. How are you, Doctor?”

“Oh, I’m right well, I thank you, suh—but I’m certainly deeply concerned about this little fellow—I’ve been worrying ever since I heard about the most brutal assault, the unpardonable, outrageous attack that young devil of Geiger’s made on him at school—these blows in the abdomen sometimes have the most serious results. Shameful, wasn’t it?” And Doc Murfree gazed into Carter’s face with his lying eyes. “Here, little man, let me look you over, I won’t hurt.”

Victor suffered it. There was no more than a slight abrasion and a little redness caused by young Geiger's vicious kick. It hadn't struck squarely enough to do real damage.

Dave Duncan's eyes were very intent upon the examination. "Find anything wrong, Doctor? I didn't."

Doc Murfree desisted. "Gentlemen, I am certainly relieved. I find no evidence of the injury I feared——"

"That's what I thought," commented David, drily; "how much?"

"Oh, now as to that—why I don't want to charge regular price for a full examination——"

"Here's a couple of dollars, Doc," said Chesterfield Carter, shortly; "take it. Don't take Dave Duncan's money."

The Doctor gazed mournfully at all present while his hand reached out to take Carter's two-dollar bill in no uncertain fashion. David remarked, "If you'll excuse us, I'll put Victor to bed. And Mr. Carter and I have some matters to go over."

Doc Murfree rose, buttoned his coat about him, and picked up his hat in a delicate and careful manner. "To have ascertained that the little fellow has probably sustained no serious injury is worth more than money to me, gentlemen. I was deeply touched—I was shocked——"

David was watching him intently. Carter was gazing at him fixedly, and Victor's glance was straight up in his face. "Good night," concluded the doctor, betaking himself through the door.

"I'm much obliged, Mr. Carter, but as a matter of general principle I wish you hadn't paid him that money," said David—"he owes me for several dollars' worth of printing."

"You'll never get it," said Carter cheerfully.

"Suppose we let Victor go to bed—pretty tired are you, Victor?" asked David.

"I am tired," he answered; "my head feels hard."

"It'll be all right in the morning," David assured him.

The big man moved about methodically; laying out clothes for Victor in the morning, raising the window in the back room for air as he slept, and replenishing the fire. Bemus, the cat, accompanied him on his rounds, vastly interested.

Carter's mind contrasted Doc Murfree and Dave Duncan. He thought how David would have ennobled a profession like that of medicine:—how he would have ennobled anything in the world; he wondered, for the hundredth time since he had known him, what his history was; why a man like David Duncan was ending his days in a mountain town in a print shop.

David finally sat down, and, armed with needle

and thread, began to mend a rent in Victor's coat. "I'd like to hear about Geiger."

"He's as happy as a mule that missed his kick and got a wallop," said Carter; "I don't believe, however, that we'll have further trouble. Geiger is shrewd. It wouldn't put money in his pocket to appear in a wrong light. He admits he was hasty, and says he whipped Henry. If I'm any judge Geiger will lay low; though you never can tell what opportunity might arise for him to do the boy a poor turn in years to come. I called on Miss Madison tonight. She's new to Clarmont this year, you know. And decidedly an acquisition, I reckon. She impresses me as one who'll look out for Victor's interests in school, which is important."

"It is," said David; "and I'm glad you called to see her."

Carter said: "Victor is a Thoroughbred, and between us we'll give the boy what he ought to have."

"I knew what kind of a boy he was," David answered; "when the Lord has been busy developing a line of folks for a few hundred years it shows in their faces."

"God doesn't make mistakes about what he puts into people's faces," rejoined Carter.

"Well, I'm greatly obliged to you," David said, rethreading his needle: he sewed in thoughtful

silence, Carter watching him. Finally the coat was neatly mended.

Carter, as though he had staid but to see it done, drew on his gloves. "I'll bid you good night; call on me for anything I can do, at any time."

Victor's sleep was long in coming. As he lay there, battered and sore, in a land unknown, the dream of the horrors he had seen in his own land grew more vivid; so tense, alert and imaginative he became, that the scenes of war and violence that had once numbed him, now seared his soul with their terrific reality. His own conflict of the day had tightened every nerve, waked every fibre in him. He thought of his father, battling for France; of his father who died for France. That France which was not now his even though his father had died, was sacred. . . . He remembered the mother arms that he never would feel again. Peace came to him only when the kind face of David Duncan softened the vision of the still night-time.

The poor bones of Victor's father lay on a battlefield. Somewhere in France rested his mother's marred body. But their invincible souls brooded over their child.

CHAPTER VIII

At school next day Henry Geiger was an uneasy boy. He appeared not to care for the ways of the world, as the world had come to be since he had seen his father and himself whipped in a single day. The only familiar phase of that astonishing day was the chastisement he had received from his father. All else was improbable, and unbelievable. Yet the boys at school, more than one of whom had taken a punch or a drubbing from Henry, were intent upon calling his attention in certain baldly insinuating ways to the fact that the day before was entirely true; and that Victor Daudet was highly respected: and that Henry Geiger's importance had gone glimmering. . . .

Henry blundered shockingly in his recitations.

That which fed the fires of his silent fury was the frequent reference to his father's uncanny downfall. That which made him inwardly rage the more, was that his father had forbidden him

to fight again in school under penalty of a terrible "licking."

By the time the day ended Henry was, for one of his usually steady nerves, in a lamentable condition. He was not a sensitive boy, but he was a sore one. If he had been able to be sick, he would have been very sick.

He hated Victor Daudet.

Something beautiful happened to David Duncan, before Victor came home from school.

He had walked far down the railroad track, following the shining rails as he dreamed. His thought was of Victor at first; of what Victor's life should be; of what an unfathomable mystery life is. He remembered his own boyhood in a still New England town, where his father was easily first among the dwellers. He remembered how strange it had seemed when his mother died; how the children had scattered when a second wife came. How his own hope of a college education had ended. How he became a printer's apprentice in a small city; of a rise in his fortunes when he was taken into the business at twenty-five. He saw Mildred, his wife, a rosy cheeked girl with a way that had challenged him—and made him love and marry her. Not many years later a trick of fortune had ruined the business—and Mildred had blamed him. . . . His dream be-

came kaleidoscopic. . . . He went from one city to another—never had sufficient capital to make a good start. Mildred was ill often. From New England he went to New York, and struggled in the treadmill there. When he saw no hope ahead, in the city of a million cares—he took a trip—saw the Blue Ridge—stopped off at Clarmont. Now he owned the little house he lived in, and sometimes his wife spoke to him.

Life? It was as comprehensible as the blue-rimmed mountains over which the late afternoon rays of the sun were shining on the rails. . . . He turned, and came home, that he might be there when Victor should come.

As he entered his shop Mildred sat in his big chair.

She half smiled at him: "Supper'll be ready upstairs at six o'clock for you and Victor."

"All right, Mildred."

She did not like demonstrativeness. He said nothing else.

She rose from the chair, and remarked: "Folks say the trouble at school wasn't his fault."

"No," he said.

She went upstairs. David knew that the "spell" which had been upon Mildred had passed.

That was the beautiful thing that happened to David; he was more grateful for the few rays of

light that came into his life than lesser souls are grateful for blessings showered upon them.

Mrs. Duncan entertained them each evening until Friday. They did not go upstairs to supper Friday, being unbidden.

Saturday was a perfect Indian summer day. In the Blue Ridge country that means air like wine shot through with rays of golden sun; light haze over purple mountains; beauty, freedom, joy of Life.

Chesterfield Carter, attorney-at-law, garbed immaculately, was expectant in mood as he drove his car to the house of Miss Letty Brown. Down the steps tripped Judith Madison, a vision in white with straw colored girdle, and a stunning black hat upon her mass of hair; and a sweet look in her eyes that monks had best not dream of. Mr. Carter helped her in, and they swung down the road to the centre of the town. Here, assembled on the drug store corner, certain representative citizenry of Clarmont saw, and were conquered. Townsman Ben Cook, formerly of the West, wearing a sombrero and a smile; Eb. Harris, the postmaster, ruddy, round and ready; John Grady Ellison, returned from a sojourn amongst the fairest of the fair in Baltimore, but willing to be convinced; Pete Clark, the tall, genial proprietor of the drug store, who stood in the door-

way and felt a thrill of approbation; the representative medical, ministerial and military men of the section appeared to be assembled: the tall and scholarly Doctor Paige, of Scrugg's Creek; Doctor Moultrie, of St. George's Pike, who stood hand-in-hand with his pretty wife—as though they were having their pictures taken; the Rev. Dr. Luck, rotund yet classical; the Rev. Mr. Yelle (an orator of no mean ability); Col. Whately Bargamin, pleased and pensive; and Lieut. Haines, erect, and extremely observant.

As the car passed all these gentlemen, at the drug store corner, there was what you might call a silent roar of approval.

On the depot platform, contentedly smoking a pipe with a big yellow bowl, stood John Geiger, surveying the new cold storage plant across the way:—he was a considerable stockholder. Carter turned at the depot, and took the road by the track, headed for Charlottesville. Said Miss Madison: "Would it be fun to take Victor with us?"

"It would. We'll do it!"

Lazing in the sun on his porch, with chair tipped back against the side of the building, Doc Murfree, observing the car and its occupants as they reached Dave Duncan's print shop, essayed to notice very particularly; and, leaning forward, lost the nice balance of his chair and was precipi-

tated, in a manner which was not courtly at all, flat upon the ground.

Doc swore less softly than they had laughed, picked himself up, and went into his office.

"He didn't do that to please us," said Miss Madison, half seriously.

"I've never known him to do anything to please anybody but himself," Carter answered.

"It's a pity for a man to live that way. He drinks, doesn't he?"

"Unquestionably," said Carter. "Ah, here's Dave and Victor—they must have been in the back of the shop. Morning, Mr. Duncan. Morning, Victor. Mr. Duncan, we're going to Charlottesville, and would be glad to take Victor with us. Would you like to go, Colonel?" Victor's eyes shone, and his feet moved as though to dance music.

David looked mightily pleased. "Let me get his overcoat—he'll need it if you're gone till night." And presently they were off, with the new overcoat David had bought for the boy stowed with the rest of the wraps.

Victor's warm little hand held Miss Madison's as they glided through the dream country, and on to Charlottesville.

That noble monument to Thomas Jefferson—his University—was the chiefest interest of the day.

They spent hours there, going through historic buildings, halls of Science and of Law, and wandering about the lawns. Mr. Carter took his guests to his fraternity home, where a set of fine faced boys received them with a courtesy good to see; and were delighted to take Victor into their rooms, where pennants on the walls from many Northern as well as Southern colleges, especially interested him.

Just before they left town Carter ran his car through the University grounds once more. He drove slowly; Victor's eyes drank in everything. The boy felt the atmosphere of the place, and Carter saw that he felt it: he stopped his car altogether, and looked into Victor's eager face—"Son, how would you like to come to the University to stay for four years, one of these days?"

"Oh!" said Victor—"Oh!—I should—*Yes!*"

"We'll fix it!" said Carter; "it'll happen!—That's a pledge, Miss Madison."

She gave him her hand impulsively, with a firm clasp.

That night Carter held an interview with David, and the men looked forward through the years, for Victor.

BOOK II
THE YOUTH

CHAPTER I

ONLY a few months after the coming of Victor to Clarmont, America took her place among the honorable nations of the world, and entered the Great War. Despite our years of drifting and our pitiful unpreparedness, America awoke.

In the swiftly passing months while the nation was exerting its energy to organize its resources and give of its manhood, these two, David and Victor, were students of American affairs so ardent that their souls became as one. While the hideous deeds of Germany, and the words and deeds as foul of the breed of pacifists and pro-Germans in this country were being writ upon history, while politics, profiteering, self-seeking, I. W. W. villainies and black-hearted treachery vied in our America with honor and enlightenment; while the nation struggled, shuddered, revolted, hoped, girded its loins; while poltroons in the market place, poltroons in Congress, rascals in the Editorial chair and vultures in our every

community would have tied our hands, there came into the hearts of true Americans a stern determination to write our name fair—to do the great duty which so long had been denied us.

“Why,” asked Victor of David, one night when the big man was reading to him from a New York newspaper about the war—“why did America wait for so long, long a time before she helped France?”

David looked down into the tense little face of the boy, who sat on a hassock at his knee.

“Well—because America is not France, Victor.”

Victor tugged with a quick little motion at the blue overall strap on his shoulder—“America is not as the same to fight for right?”

“H-m,” said David. “Well, you see, Victor, over here there are so many people who do not understand. And our folks are not all one kind of folks, like your people in France. And I guess some of them would sell their souls for the Almighty Dollar.”

A shadow crossed Victor’s face.

David went on, thoughtfully: “Maybe when our soldiers in France begin to get killed—it’ll set folks over here to thinking. And they’ll think we must fight and fight and help hard—help with all we’ve got, and forget about our Almighty Dollars, and things.”

Victor's small shoulders involuntarily shrugged. He extended his two little hands in a characteristic gesture: "Why must it be that one should think even two seconds about the big dollar—it is not big. It is nothing—nothing with——"

"I know it, Victor. I know it." And David patted the little shoulder. A slow, deep smile lighted his face, and he said: "The other day I heard about a Frenchman, a feller in Louisiana, who sold his horse so he could take that money and give it to help France. This horse was about all he owned, and it left him awful poor, and another feller said to him, 'Why did you sell your horse—I couldn't get along without my horse. 'Well,' the first feller said, 'France couldn't get along without mine.'—And I guess that's the way of it!"

. . . In the swift days of fevered activity, the tremendous onrush of disclosures, the increased awakening of the American people, their final strides toward efficiency, something of it all was in the air even in quiet Clarmont. 'Twas like a steady, strange, potent echo.

As Germany writhed, as Britain and France unceasingly poured out their life blood on the Western Front and the Kaiser's troops were pushed back, back, back; when really large forces of American troops reached France; when the cataclysmic surprises of our first year at war

brought their train of events; while Germany writhed and struggled more and more, and the bombast of their leaders showed fear as well as foolishness; when their hypocritical peace propaganda gave way to a hunted wail—when, in short, proud, ruthless, barbaric Germany cracked under the strain, these, these were the days when Victor and David followed the course of events with a zest which God, seeing, must have smiled upon.

When, at last, quarter was given to Germany—and terms of peace too fair and sweet were given, for deeds so black and crimes so foul—France, exalted before all mankind, emerged from her awful struggle noblest of the Nations of the Earth.

David told Victor she was noblest. He said, "It's because everybody over there gave everything they had to give, and smiled when they gave it."

The simple integrity and unselfishness of the gray haired old printer was woven into the very life of Victor, as childhood fled away, and the boy developed rapidly. David, a careful reader, and a thinker, was wise. He gave heed to what he should place in the boy's hands. Sometimes he pondered long after Victor had gone to bed on this point, and kept back a book that he had considered giving him, until his mind should be

ready for it. He stimulated and fed the growing intellect.

David's life: how patient it was! His wife grew old sourly, and her health suffered. He waited on her as though she had been all that any man could have fondly expected. Because she took to complaining of his printing press, he built her a pretty cottage, by the side of his print shop, and he and Victor lived their own lives, as before.

Victor did well in school. Miss Madison did not make the mistake of attempting to pet him, but, rather, encouraged him without stint. Indeed he gave her a greater interest in remaining in Clarmont than she otherwise could have had. She knew his pride; she appreciated his idealistic trend; was deeply interested in his intellectual audacity, a racial characteristic which manifested itself early. She sympathized to the uttermost with him in his daily life, in school and in town.

The Geigers, father and son, were his uncompromising enemies. There were a hundred things done and said to embarrass and discredit Victor. It was good to see him go steadily onward in his fine youth, ignoring, rising above. He outstripped Henry Geiger in scholarship as he outstripped him in personality and attractiveness. Tall, clean-limbed, the dark-eyed boy's bearing was that of a young prince in comparison with the slouching gait and stout animality of Henry

Geiger. Both boys were going to college. The Clarmont school had become a "four year high school," advancing in importance (at a respectful distance) with the prosperity of the town. In fact, it was John Geiger, prominent in town affairs because of his money and holdings, who, as President of the School Board, had accomplished this educational phenomenon. Having determined to send Henry to the University, he wished him to obtain the requisite preparation in Clarmont. Geiger disliked Judith Madison to such an extent that he proposed a man principal for the school; and picked his man. He was Geiger's man was George Schakel, the new principal, and well qualified to do Geiger's bidding. Miss Madison continued in the school, as the change had been made suddenly, and at a time of year when she could not easily have obtained another position. For years she had helped support a feeble father and a helpless mother who lived in the old family home in tidewater Virginia; these lives that were linked to hers were passing into the clearing where, for a little while, the aged linger, looking up to the skies before their eyes grow too dim and they journey but a little further into the great Shadow. Judith was wont to wonder at the tranquillity of their lives in the midst of a time when changes more rapid and striking than America or the

world had ever seen were taking place on every hand.

By the time Victor Daudet was fifteen, Clarmont was no longer a little mountain town; it had grown amazingly; was fast on the way to being a city; it had increased, relatively, more in four years than Charlottesville, a dozen miles down the slope, or Staunton across the ridge,—twenty-five miles away, had ever grown. Just what had given the impetus nobody inquired. They were too busy with their material prosperity. Clarmont had become the centre of the apple and peach orchards which were making Albemarle County famous. The cold storage warehouse of John Geiger and his associates had been quadrupled. Sometimes it contained a hundred and fifty thousand barrels—being held for a higher market. Production and shipments were thrilling to the people. Cooperage factories, other enterprises, supplementary industries, banking—everything thinkable and some items that nobody would have dreamed, had their home in Clarmont. Electric lights, a fine new depot, spur tracks, grain elevators, new streets, brick blocks, retail business, rows upon rows of houses, stretching into the country, and all the quickly uprising incidentals, crowded the scene. A trolley line was in process of building. All the prosperous residents owned automobiles and the less prosperous

contributed to their upkeep, as is the manner.

Clarmont was but a tiny section of American materialism; and in the midst of this, save for the year he served his country abroad, one deep-eyed young man had steadily grown in soul. Eleven months in France had changed the eyes; the wound that brought him home had been recovered from; his eyes were deeper than ever, and would always be a little different.

. . . If you note the clear color in her face and the free look in her eye and the fine grace of her carriage as she enters the new bank block, and goes upstairs to the office of Chesterfield Carter, Attorney-at-Law, you will say that the years have not been unkind to Judith Madison.

CHAPTER II

"SCHOOL out?—I didn't realize it was past four—have this chair, please. Glad to see you—what's the word?"

"Several of them," Miss Madison declared, in a tone of conviction, smiling as she spoke. The smile deepened, for a moment, and then a particularly serious look took its place. Carter was quick to notice this.

"That's all for to-day," he said, addressing his stenographer; "please mail these" (he handed the young lady a sheaf of letters he had signed before Miss Madison came in)—"Good night, Miss Miriam."

As soon as they were alone Miss Madison took off a glove—"I'm doing this so I can strike your desk with my bare hand if I want to! I'm furious!"

Half a dozen lines in Carter's face were sharply discernible. He looked at her gravely—"What's

Schakel been doing?—Has he been unpleasant to you?"

"It's Victor," she said; "he treats him shamefully. In the first place Schakel isn't a gentleman——"

"I knew that the first time I saw him."

"I reckon you don't half know him. Every time he looks at one with those little pig-eyes of his, it's offensive! He sneers at Victor in class, reprimands the boy constantly, and tries to break his spirit."

"Geiger's back of Schakel. You know that?"

"Of course. The Geigers have set out to make Victor's last year in High School unendurable."

"In my judgment," said Carter, with a shrewd little grimace, "it goes as far as this: young Geiger is so jealous of Victor that he—and his noble sire and the exalted Principal likewise—would stop at nothing. Inferiority, so to speak, resents itself, and inflicts harm upon its betters."

She laughed, a short, odd little laugh which made her face piquant.

Carter knitted his brows. "I wish I had some say. The only man on the school board I have any particular influence with is Jones, and he's too busy with apples to care about schools. I reckon we can't do much except watch. We'll get Victor through the year, though."

Miss Madison drew on her glove—"I just had to see you about this. If you find a chance to help——"

"I wish you were principal of the school again for Victor's sake, and for your own. Judith, you don't realize how it's hurt me, this having Schakel take away the reward of your years of work, and patience. It was a shabby trick to put a fellow like him in your place!"

"Oh, it isn't so much that—I can endure——"

"Don't be in a hurry to go, Judith. You don't come in often—I don't see you half as often as I wish I did. A fellow gets tired with nothing better than the duplicity of human nature to think about and deal in——"

"And that's all I've brought you to think about. I oughtn't to have troubled you!"

"Yes, you ought." He spoke with such deep earnestness she felt herself drawn to him; he moved his chair very close to hers: "Judith, I've been loving you a right long time."

The last rays of the afternoon sun lingered in the still office. . . . Crimson crept into the cheeks of the woman . . . her lips parted . . . she did not speak . . . her eyes were downcast . . . she was beautiful—her eyes were upturned to his with a haunting look in them—"Oh, Chester," she breathed. "Judith!" he took her hand, and kissed it reverently—"I'm not much—not good

enough for you—but, Oh, my Dear, I love you——” His eyes besought hers. . . .

“We’ve been such good, good friends,” she said, at last. “Can’t we——”

“You, you’re not denying me—anything beyond friendship?—I’ve waited.”

There was a hurt in his voice—“I haven’t meant to take advantage of you, ever—I’m not asking you now because it’s hard and unhappy for you at school. You don’t think that of me?”

“No,” she said.

The light in the sky was fading fast; the after-glow that had flooded the room was gone; dusk, not light, seemed creeping in at the window.

“Chester, I have a duty in life. I couldn’t allow you to take it upon yourself, in any sense, and I can’t think for a moment of giving it up while the duty lasts—and it may be for years—I’m all that’s left to Father and Mother, I’m all they have; they must have me—we, we’re poor.” She said the word without emphasis, and without apology.

He answered her; there was a thrill in his tone; “I love you. I shall love you. Your right of decision—for now—goes beyond my right of asking. I want ever, and ever, your friendship. Can I have it, *with hope?*”

She arose; a beautiful pride, and a sweet dignity were in her mien: and a look in her eyes that

no man could read, nor any man ever forget. "I honor you. You have my implicit faith. Is that love?"

He found no answer, for a moment. "I hope so," he said, at last.

"Life is a problem, and love is——"

"The answer?" he quickly said.

—"The finality, for a Woman."

As she spoke she gave him her hand in a clasp that thrilled him; for a long moment she let him hold it. "Good night, Chester." He knew that he must answer as she willed. "Good night."

And then she was gone, with a swift rustle of her dress as she passed through the door.

He sat at his desk in the fast coming darkness.

CHAPTER III

VICTOR walked slowly home from school with folded theme paper sticking out of his inside coat pocket, so preoccupied that when the sheaf of paper rose up and grazed his chin he thrust it back, saying, "Excuse me."

As he entered the yard he saw David carrying firewood into Mrs. Duncan's cottage. When David came out for another armful, he said, "I'll do it. Let me fill the box." Victor took off his school coat and brushed it as soon as he went into the print shop, and began setting type. He stood steadily at his task, working with quick fingers that did not begin to keep pace with what he was thinking about. He tried to decide exactly how he should act in school to get the least possible attention from that fellow Schakel. He wanted no odds from Schakel, but he intended to maintain his scholarship. Every mean little act of Schakel's in the past few weeks rose in his mind; the sneer he had given him that day in the Literature

class because Victor had advanced an opinion of his own—an opinion which Victor had thought was proper even though the book didn't say so—that sneer rankled. The boy flushed scarlet as he thought of it. Schakel! The name made him ill; the fellow's leering face, and mean little eyes, and thick hands and rough voice and his nasty way of walking up and down the aisle, sometimes turning suddenly back to see what you were doing at your desk—— Faugh! Victor's teeth were set close, his fingers flew on, and he had the job ready for proof in a few minutes.

David, working across the room, observed Victor's black, black hair, and keen eyes, and flushed face. David knew well enough how things had gone at school since Schakel came, though Victor had said little. This afternoon, because he said nothing at all, David conjectured it had been a particularly unpleasant day.

“Victor, I guess we better finish as soon as we can. I'll hold copy and you read.”

They went at it, corrected, and at six it was done.

They had a fine supper. David had bought some York River oysters for Mrs. Duncan that day, and had taken two quarts while he was about it. David and Victor had theirs both stewed and fried, with bacon.

After supper Victor sat down to study. He put

his mind to it, and in an hour had done enough. "I guess I'll go down to the drug store," Victor said. David understood. The boy wanted to go somewhere, anywhere, rather than brood over his school troubles.

"Yes, Victor; you go right ahead."

At Pete Clark's drug store, which continued to be the town forum where citizens exchanged views, and saved the nation, there was a choice gathering that night. To Victor's disgust, John Geiger, Henry's father, was there, and gave him a fishy, forbidding look, when he came in . . . doubtless he would tell Schakel—who boarded at Geiger's—that Victor spent the evening loafing, and Schakel would mention it in school next day if he got the chance. . . . This passed from Victor's mind in a moment, though. Doc Murfree, partly drunk and equally eloquent, was holding forth on politics and the imminent election of 1920. With reference to the general rascality of Republicans Doc was oratorical.

"—To h—l with the damned Yankees!" he concluded, as a clincher.

Chesterfield Carter laughed in a way that irritated the orator: "I'm done with blind partisanship. Southerners ought to begin to break away from prejudices half a century old. Doc, you're too sectional."

When a gentleman like Doc Murfree finds it im-

possible to argue intelligently he resorts to personalities.

"What do you know about it? Pusillanimous an' contemptible! You're no gentleman! Every Northerner is a crook—Republicans narrow, bigoted, rotten, black as hinges of Hades——"

"Those are red hot, Doc—better cut it out," said Pete Clark; and he nodded meaningly toward the door. Ladies were coming in.

Doc Murfree subsided, and presently made good his escape, feeling, possibly, that his mind was too fatigued to argue with Chesterfield Carter, whose glance was sharply upon him.

Victor had been interested before, but in the next half hour he became intensely so, as Chesterfield Carter, Ben Cook, and several others, discussed the campaign.

Carter found opportunity before Victor left, to say an encouraging word to him. "Don't let them dishearten you at school, Son—saw wood. You'll come out!"

Victor thanked him in a low tone, and passed by John Geiger, who sat on a stool by the door smoking a fat cigar. Geiger kicked the door shut after Victor before he could close it himself.

CHAPTER IV

It's rather hard on youth to be placed at the mercy of such persons as Schakel:—quite frequently they occupy positions of authority. As Principal of Clarmont High School, with so powerful a patron as John Geiger his friend and guide, Schakel no doubt believed that he had a divine right to exercise authority to the uttermost. To men like Schakel, the world over, authority means, not a trust, but a vantage point whence they are entitled to drive all before them by force; by brutality, if necessary. It was proper for him to conduct a ruthless campaign of extermination against Victor Daudet.

Victor read a paper in the American Literature class next day in which he dared to advance certain criticism which was out of the beaten path. The fact that Victor was able to justify, by an exceptionally keen course of reasoning, the theory he advanced and the criticism he made was to Schakel outrageous. He sneered; he stormed; he

called Victor, finally, a fool. That was the word he used,—before the whole school. Victor sat down at his desk, crimson, but silent. That he should sit down angered Schakel. He commanded him to rise: “We are not through. Stand up! You are impertinent!”

Victor did not rise. He but answered: “I have no more to say, Sir.”

“You mean to tell me that you will not arise in this school when you are told to arise?” stormed Schakel; and he came from the platform to Victor’s desk, and shook his finger in the boy’s face. Decency and dignity could have borne no more. “Sir, to ignore a misfortune is to minimize it. I must ignore you!”

Schakel glared at him: “Take your books and go home!” he shouted.

“Mr. Schakel!” said Miss Madison. Her clear voice cut the tense silence of the room. It was fearless. Schakel turned. “Victor,” she said, “could hardly be expected to be himself after you called him a fool. Is it not possible that you were hasty? Is it fair? I can say to the County Superintendent that I have never found Victor a fool, and never called him that, in the four years I taught here before you came.” Her face was flushed, but her voice dangerously even. Schakel saw that he had gone too far. The thought of an authority higher than his own cowed Schakel.

"Miss Madison!" said Victor, "I will go!"

"You will not go!" said Schakel; "we will have no more of this!" Schakel walked slowly to the platform; within, he was furious; but self-interest was strong: Miss Madison had driven home her point. He cleared his throat: "The—er—the school will come to order."

(This was really funny, because you could have heard a pin drop, until Schakel spoke.) "Let there be no further manifestations of disorder of any sort whatsoever," he continued; "We shall have order, and *nothing but order!*"

So spake Authority, and was relieved.

Miss Madison looked out of the window and bit her lips to keep from laughing. . . . The next class was called.

Motoring through certain streets not far from the school building, at an hour not far from four—oh, well, you know how it's done. Mr. Carter took Miss Madison into his car to convey her home; which was many miles that afternoon. She told him of the day's doings.

"Superb! Congratulations!"

She laughed. "It was splendid to see Victor!" she said; "and who could blame him for what he said?"

"Nobody!"

They rode in silence for a while,

"Judith," he finally remarked, "I didn't half tell you what I wanted to, yesterday. I can only ask you to understand that I honor your feelings, and won't say anything more about it now. I see your position exactly."

She flushed, and gave him a grateful look; and a smile of unalterable friendship.

Nothing else passed between them concerning the day before, and the problem that was in their hearts. He helped her out of his car, and said good night. She went in to think of him, and he ran a dozen miles into the country, thinking of her.

Judith knew that behind Chesterfield Carter's kind acquiescence was deep love. How different from his usual impetuous warmth was the restraint he had summoned! She read it rightly. It was because he was nobly her friend. Upon their years of friendship she dwelt with all her mind. She admired him, as she had always admired him for his quality of staunchness. If Chesterfield Carter was your friend he was completely your friend. He never promised more than he fulfilled, and he always found a way to help when you needed him.

There is no finer quality in a man or woman than to be ready to help. Judith's heart was troubled that her way was uncertain. Her perplexity was deep. . . .

"Life doesn't come out as you want it to, when you want it," she said to herself, as she sat in reverie trying to fathom the depth of Duty and to measure it with the call of Love. Was it love? Life was strange. Love was a riddle. . . . So silently and steadily and powerfully had their friendship gone on, that he had become more absolutely a part of her life than she ever before had realized. The woman's soul within her was moved to its depths as she pondered.

When Judith Madison was in trouble she did what most first-class men and women do:—as nearly as possible forgot it by going straightway to help someone else. At seven she left the house and walked rapidly across town to the print shop of David Duncan. Clarmont had grown comparatively little in the direction David lived. She took the old familiar route down the track from the depot, and, as she reached the shop, and looked through the big window, saw Victor setting type. She entered and greeted him cheerily. "I wanted to see you, and to tell you how glad I am you were able to keep your courage so well at school to-day." Victor placed a chair for her, and shook her warm hand cordially, and his eyes were resplendent: "But, Miss Madison, I had a friend—you were there! You were perfect. I thank you!"

She smiled. "Did you tell Mr. Duncan?"

"Not too much. He has troubles. Mrs. Duncan

is not so well. He is with her in her house now."

She glanced about the neatly kept shop; and then looked directly into the boy's eager face: "Victor, you've a battle before you. It's lasted a long time, and now it's upon you more than ever. It isn't easy to endure, but nothing is easy that makes us strong. To-day you took a risk—one must take risks in battle.—You told Mr. Schakel the truth, but it was dangerous."

"I guess *so*! But I could not help it."

"No, I reckon you couldn't. But I want you to promise me something——"

"I will promise," he said quickly. "For you I would promise what you ask."

"If Mr. Schakel attacks you again, please say just this: 'Mr. Schakel, you must excuse me, but I am here only to study.'—You see, Victor, if you say no more than that it won't give him a chance to expel you from school."

"Which is what he wants—I know."

Compassion filled her eyes. The boy's own eyes glistened. His voice was intense: "But, Miss Madison—why, why, *why*? It is so without sense. They are so foolish!"

"Meanness is always foolish, Victor. People who are that way are foolish; it's a kind of greed that many human beings have. They know you have something they have not. Because they can't have it, their only way is to try to hurt you——"

"What have I?"

"Nobility, Victor."

The boy looked into her face with a pride and devotion in his eyes that called forth all her affection; and evoked in her a sense of deep responsibility: "Yes, Victor, you have nobility; keep it *unsullied* and high. I've thought, sometimes, of your father, and how he died for honor on the greatest battlefield in the world. Victor, some of us are always at Verdun. There is no greater glory than to be brave at Verdun!"

"What I feel I must say—I love you that you are so good, and because you make me good, and because you give me so much honor,—which I must deserve!"

He smiled, and then he laughed—"Oh, as for Mister Schakel, I shall endure him until the stars have fallen." And he laughed again.

Perhaps it was his birthright that he could be gay and deep, strong and insonciant.

"Victor, you're in the right. Right will triumph. Keep your faith, and go on, on!" She rose and gave him her hand.

"I thank you more than I can tell," Victor said; "please know!"

"Yes!"

Victor wished to escort her home, but she thought it best for him not to do so, lest by chance they should meet any of the Geigers. No doubt

something unpleasant would have been said or done as a result.

So she said good-night.

Victor sang at his work until David came in, when he told him Miss Madison had called. Victor made light to David of the day at school, seeing that he was tired and worn. But the big man, sitting in his chair in relaxation, studied the boy's face earnestly; and understood.

"Victor, you just stand it. You've got sand, and there's a kind of sand that don't run. It's the sand you use when you fight the hardest battle in life—up, up, to the high place you've got to get to."

CHAPTER V

"How did school go to-day—anything new?" asked Attorney Carter. (He met by chance Miss Madison halfway home from her school the next afternoon and was giving her a spin in his car.)

"New? No, nothing. Quiet on the Potomac. Mr. Schakel is almost reticent."

"I ascertained Schakel's measure to-day," said Carter; "saw Mr. Lee, County Superintendent, in Charlottesville this morning."

"Did you say anything——"

"Not too much—be sure of that."

"Mr. Lee's been kind to me always——"

"And will be; he's that sort. Here's the elevating truth I learned in regard to our principal—he spelled his name S-H-A-K-E-L until he came here. Thought he'd make a hit with Geiger by letting him infer he sported Teutonic blood——"

"Then he isn't, at all?"

"No. He's an American. Raised on the Rappa-

hannock River; a cringing, pocketbook American."

"It was a Frenchman," said Miss Madison, "who wrote, even in the early days of the War, 'In another year the degree of true civilization which a nation has attained will be measured by the depth of its reprobation of Germany.'"

Carter turned his earnest gaze upon her: "Judith, I suppose you realize that America made a pretty late showing in the European crisis?"

"Late—yes—I reckon so."

"We went in when it became expedient," he said; "expediency was our guiding star from the day the Lusitania was sunk, yet what did it avail us to evade, compromise and postpone? Right is everlastingly right, and fearless Honor is not a thing to be assumed because time and conditions have forced one's hand."

Her cheeks were scarlet; his earnestness had roused her. "I reckon you've thought about this! I'm a Southerner to the tips of my toes, and a Democrat all the way through—but——"

"Why should we here in the South, the proud, high-spirited, generous South forever give of our generosity for the reward of pork and patronage rather than the surety of National Integrity?"

"Who'll be elected?"

"The candidate who proves the better politician, if one may judge by recent years."

She laughed thoughtfully, and remarked: "There has to be a political system, doesn't there?"

"Yes. But under our present system, by partisan politics the people saddle themselves first with one set of autocrats and then with the other."

. . . . They had been riding on so smoothly over the perfect road that they were in Charlottesville before they realized it. They ran by the University athletic field; went on down town, and took supper at an hotel. They came back to Clarmont in the glory of a Blue Ridge moonlit night.

Southerners can thoroughly understand, and Northerners can readily believe that Chesterfield Carter's political convictions created interest in his community. Not that they were likely to change the provincial temper of the people much; but Carter was so unqualifiedly respected that his ardent beliefs commanded attention.

On the night before Tuesday, election day, there was a gathering in Pete Clark's newly enlarged drug store which taxed its capacity. Victor Daudet was present when Doc Murfree attacked Carter for his political views with particular offensiveness. The arguments of the half-inebriated Murfree took the form of abuse, and finally, in his

excitement, he called Carter a Renegade Son of the South.

"You mean," said Carter in a dangerously even tone, "you mean that from your contemptibly narrow viewpoint there can be neither truth, honor or loyalty in any man who doesn't vote the same ticket as yourself?"

"Any man in the South who votes against the South is a Crook!" said Murfree.

"Murfree, it's such men as you who've been holding back the South for forty years; and it's such views as yours that to-day are making the thinking men of the South question the wisdom of delivering themselves body and soul to any political party whatever. And there are patriots to-day in Dixie Land who are trying to teach the rising generation that National honor is better than Sectional Suicide.—And incidentally I am so glad to be considered a Renegade Son of the South by persons like yourself that I extend to myself ample congratulations, and to you my profound pity."

Doc's fiery red face went white . . . he shuffled toward the door . . . and went out.

"I thought so," said Carter, quietly.

Everybody laughed excitedly, and the solons and citizens shortly afterward left the store.

Victor returned to the print shop, his head filled with a heterogeneous mass of political informa-

tion. He had been listening to political talk for a week or more, and was much impressed by what Carter had said from time to time. To-night, eager, excited, keen, he wanted to know everything that David could tell him.

They sat down together. David spread out a large map of the United States, and pointed out the great western and northern sections, and explained the political divisions and problems in a way new to Victor. The boy's eager mind seized upon the tariff, and David explained that; David gave him an idea, as best he could, of the diversity of enterprises in America, and Victor listened intently. His comment was: "Then Clarmont is only a little speck, and the South is just a small piece of America."

"That's it," David said.

"And why are almost all Southerners Democrats? Why do not more people here think as Mr. Carter thinks?"

David explained to him much more fully than he had learned in his school history about the Civil War, and reconstruction; the wrongs inflicted on the South by politicians; and the slowly dying distrust of the South for the North, until America entered the world war and became reunited.

"Are politicians bad?" asked Victor.

"Bad manners," said David, grimly. . . .

"A man should think of his country, and forget himself," said Victor, after a little.

David's eyes lighted: "That's the whole story, Victor!"

The boy pondered in silence.

"Victor, you are an American—you feel you are an American, don't you?"

"I am an American," he said, with a loyal light in his eyes. "I wish to be a true and high American!"

"Victor, you live, and you will live, in stirring and critical times in American history. I am an old man. If I could leave you, when my time comes, knowing that you were fair and *big*, I would be glad."

"Big?" queried Victor.

"Not narrow, I mean. Not bound to any one section of the country. There's something greater than Northernism or Southernism, and that's Americanism. Keep your mind *open*. Let the light of the Truth come into your mind because it is open. Read, and study, and think, and judge."

"I shall do that!"

"There's one thing more I want to tell you, Victor. It takes a long time for the Right to triumph, but it will triumph, at last. It's been the history of the world. It's been the history of France in her struggle with Germany. France won because France was right; because her peo-

ple knew they were right, and fought to the end, *with their souls*.—You know that, Victor?"

"Yes, I know." Tears of pride were in his eyes.

"In the long run, this is a moral universe. Germany made a mistake because she thought Might was Right. It's the other way. Germany must pay the cost of her mistake. She is to be pitied, that her rulers tried to turn back the clock of civilization and humanity by hundreds of years when they outraged Belgium, and attempted to crush France and all Europe to get what they wanted to satisfy their greed.

"A nation, or a political party, or an individual, is judged by the deeds it does. You, Victor, your life, will be judged by what you do. If you think right, you will do right. For right thinking makes you strong and good when you must do. Democrats are not always right, and Republicans are not always right; but right is always right. Remember that, as an American."

It was midnight.

The big old clock on the wall back of David's printing press struck resonantly twelve times.

"We better go to bed, Victor. To-morrow,—in only a few hours—the people in all parts of the United States will vote for their next President."

"It is a wonderful thought!" Victor said.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL fences, builded, assuredly, by the most adroit politician of his time, proved insuperable for the Republican party. They lost once more.

The American people relax, and good-naturedly pay their election bets after the votes have been counted. Doc Murfree in a burst of patriotism a week ago had offered to bet Ben Cook a "quart of liquor" on the result. Ben had compromised by betting a wheelbarrow ride from the depot to the First National Bank Building. As Doc never paid a bet or anything else he took the bet. Ben made festal preparations to pay his bet, engaging two musical gentlemen of color, Messrs. Sam Jones and Horatio Green for the occasion. Sam Jones was tall and yellow, and played the trombone; Horatio Green was black and short, and could make a cornet talk. Ben hired them to head the procession and play patriotic airs when he should wheel Doc Murfree from depot

to bank while the populace viewed the unique spectacle.

"You be at the depot when the six-eleven comes in to-night, and I'll pay that bet," Ben told Murfree dolefully, on Thursday afternoon at the drug store.

The news spread.

A drizzling rain was beginning to fall, at six-eleven. Ben was there, with his wheelbarrow and his musicians: he had also, with wise forethought, equipped himself with a raincoat.

Doc and his long legs were loaded into the wheelbarrow by willing hands, and a yell of delight rose up from the citizenry. The procession started, Mr. Jones, tall and yellow, and Mr. Green, short, fat and black, discoursing sweet music. The first air was "Dixie." Ben Cook wheeled valiantly; the increasing crowd roared handsomely. Doc Murfree, fortified with a stiff drink, tried to be comfortable and to rejoice in the discomfiture of Ben Cook. The rain increased, slightly, and Ben paused for breath. "Go on, you—go on!" spake Doc.

"Whew—I gotta rest!" said Ben. He gave a signal to his musicians, and they played Yankee Doodle. Doc was enraged; and—wet. He got out of the barrow indignantly; and was thrust back by merry citizens. The strains of Yankee Doodle smote the air, and Ben started at a rapid

clip. He negotiated a couple of curbs in a way which jounced Murfree unmercifully. He trundled his burden on the concrete sidewalk which ran beneath the railroad tracks.

"Hey! D—n it! National Bank!" shrieked Doc.

Ben addressed his passenger: "No mention made of the route from depot to bank—I'm goin' by way of Raymond's ice-factory!"

This was a quarter of a mile ride. The big crowd, now wildly enthusiastic, yelled and cheered. Murfree disentangled his legs and leaped from the barrow indignantly. It took the citizenry four seconds to put him back. The musicians struck up "The Star Spangled Banner!" Ben increased his speed: Murfree was bumped; decidedly, remarkably bumped. Every bump shook an oath from him. The rain came down splendidly. . . . Ben paused for breath in front of Raymond's ice-factory, and Doc hurled himself free of the barrow. Never were hands so willing as those which returned him. Mr. Cook had friends.

"You d—d insulting, low-bred ——!" shrieked Doc, shaking his fist in impotent fury—"You Yankee outcast! You——"

Said Ben: "Doc, the main trouble with you is your manners. You're a real gentleman, but your language ain't chaste. You're a damned fine

man, but you're just a lee-tle mite sectional in your feelin's—I aim to make a regular American of you—a regular all 'round roarin' Patriot!—Boys, let him have the medley! Mix it up!" Messrs. Jones and Green produced a bizarre, and an impartially patriotic effect, by rendering alternate strains from "Yankee Doodle" and "Dixie."

The crowd cheered merrily, as Ben seized the barrow handles, and the party proceeded in the rain. . . .

It was six-forty when Ben Cook stopped in front of the bank building. A wet heap of torrential language was allowed to disembark from the barrow. Doc Murfree made his way through the crowd, and his long shambling figure disappeared up the street.

Ben paid his musicians a dollar each, and presented them with the wheelbarrow.

"It was worth the money!" he remarked.

At Clarmont High School next day Principal Shakel, whose recent attempts to appear before Miss Madison and the school as a stern and important Educator had been of a sort to make the angels weep, felt called upon to comment severely regarding the "Disgraceful Scene enacted in our public streets" the evening before. Ben Cook's post-election function had affronted the aesthetic sense of the Educator.

Mr. Shakel paced up and down before the platform, and indignantly demanded to know what the world in general and Clarmont in particular, and the morals of his pupils very especially were coming to when such things could be, and when the young gentlemen of Clarmont High School dishonored themselves by witnessing such a disgraceful Scene. He had observed that certain pupils—here he glared at Victor Daudet—were so degraded that they followed the wheelbarrow parade its entire length, and gave evidence by their unseemly merriment that they were in sympathy with the performance.

In short, Principal Shakel ranted until Miss Madison feared for his sanity. As for Victor, he felt he had never listened to anything so interesting since he had known Shakel.

School being dismissed, Victor took what books he would need until Monday, and left the building with a queer delight in his mind: he was thinking how entertaining Shakel had been, when Henry Geiger overtook and accosted him, just outside the school yard.

"What you think of that?" demanded Henry.

"Of what?" queried Victor.

"Mr. Shakel's speech," said Henry.

"Speech?"

"Yes, speech," Henry said, reddening.

"Oh."

"Well, can't you answer like a gentleman when you are asked a question?"

Half a dozen boys were gathered around to enjoy the colloquy, and noted with interest that Henry was losing his temper.

"Which question?" asked Victor, softly.

"The question I have asked you—Mr. Shakel's speech?"

"Speech?"

"Yes, speech—don't you know anything, you fool!"

"Fool?"

"Yes, Fool!"

Victor drew himself up, and looked searchingly into Henry's face, which was exceedingly red: Henry was blowing out his cheeks, taking air into his mouth and expelling it with little puffs.

"Henry," said Victor.

"Well—*Henry*—what?"

"Henry Geiger," said Victor.

The other boys roared with laughter.

Henry's fists went shut. He cracked his knuckles together: "Damn Fool!" he shouted.

Victor gazed at him as though in compassion:

"Henry, I am surprised, I am surprised and I am sorry, that you should call Mr. Shakel by such a name—it is not respectful."

—Something seemed to percolate Henry's understanding—he departed.

CHAPTER VII

VICTOR noticed that David's hair grew whiter every day.

The big man came back from Mrs. Duncan's cottage one evening, and as he let himself down into the chair beside the case where Victor was working the boy saw that he was more than ordinarily tired. His shoulders were relaxed, and, it seemed to Victor, leaned down upon his great chest. David looked up at him: "Victor, stop awhile. I want to talk with you."

Victor placed a chair beside him.

"My boy, you've been a son to me. You've helped me ever since you came to me. You've helped my life. It's been a comfort to have you here in the shop—not for what you've done alone—but because you've been willing and cheerful, and kind to a fellow. We've been comrades, Victor."

The boy's eyes filled with tears. "I am glad."

"To-morrow is February fifth. That's the day

we decided was your birthday. You will be sixteen. You have a good mind, Victor. I know, and Mr. Carter knows. We've talked about you. Next Fall you will be ready to enter college. We're going to send you to the University. That's settled. You're my son. We intend you to have the advantages you ought to have. Now if anything happens to me—if anything *should* happen, you'll go just the same. You've worked faithfully for all you're going to have,—for your education. Provision has been made for you. Mr. Carter holds in trust twenty-eight hundred dollars. You can't spend money at the University as some boys do, but you can get your education. You can work vacations for me, and it will be a great happiness in my life to know you are learning, and preparing for a useful life. We know you will profit by study."

"You are as my Father—I can not say my thanks—but I give them! I shall be so proud to study and to be there that I shall—but I cannot tell you—I can only do!"

The boy was deeply moved. Such affection shone in his eyes that David placed his hand upon his shoulder in grateful return. "There, Victor,—you just know it's all right. You talk to Mr. Carter all you want to about the University, and, if anything *should* happen to me—you and he will conduct business matters, and all matters."

"Mr. Duncan!"

"Well, Victor."

"Nothing must or shall happen to you!"

"Why, no, I guess not. But you see I want to know for my own satisfaction that it's all right—that it's all fixed. Now I'm going to run over to the cottage for a while. When you finish that job, you can go to bed. Maybe I won't be back for some little time." He pulled himself out of his deep chair as he spoke; put on his old, familiar hat, and passed through the print shop door.

Intelligence and gratitude go together. A wealth of feeling filled Victor's heart; as he worked at his task, he thought of his own life and history, and of the kindness beyond measure of David. He wondered, with a true sense of thankfulness, how twenty-eight hundred dollars had ever been laid aside for him—it seemed a great sum of money. And David's money came slowly, he knew. Never were there big profits. And there was Mrs. Duncan, so often ill. Was it right, that he, Victor, should have this money? It troubled him, until finally, came into his mind the thought that if there was ever need, he would work to care both for David and for Mrs. Duncan, and repay everything. It was wonderful, that he could go to the University. Never had it seemed so wonderful.

He would talk about it with Mr. Carter some

more very soon! Mr. Carter knew all about the University.

What Victor did not dream was that Carter had put fourteen hundred dollars with David's fourteen hundred to make the twenty-eight hundred. Nobody knew that but David Duncan: and David had promised Carter that nobody should.

Chesterfield Carter was a friend's friend. He was that kind of a gentleman.

"David!"

"Yes—yes, Mildred."

"Haven't you got my hot-water bag ready yet—my feet are frozen—oh, how I suffer!"

His head appeared through the kitchen door. "Just a minute or so more, Mildred—it's heating as fast as can be."

"Oh, David, shut that door! You *know* it makes a draft on me every time you open it! You are so careless——"

He had hastily withdrawn, and closed the door.

When the bag was filled he brought it in and placed it at her feet as she reclined in her low chair by the stove. He tried to be all gentleness in his motions, but she found cause to complain of his awkwardness.

"Well, now, Mildred, I s'pose I am awkward—I'm awful sorry."

There should have been no mistaking the com-

passion in his voice, but she answered, "You annoy me."

A big hurt showed in David's eyes, but he said nothing.

"Be sure you fix the fire in my room right—and the windows, too. I almost *froze* last night!"

He went speedily to her room, and put fresh fuel on the fire. When he re-entered the sitting room she said: "No, I don't think I'll go to bed yet—I don't feel like it."

David sat down.

She fussed with her shawl, suddenly glanced up, and said, "You needn't look at me so curiously—what's on your mind, anyway? Do you want to go to the shop?" she concluded, querulously.

"No, Mildred, not if you want me here."

She settled back in her chair, found the posture not to her liking, and leaned forward. "David, our marriage has been a hard life. My troubles have made me an old woman before my time. I've never known anything but trouble since you failed in business in Concord. You made a mistake, and I've paid for it my whole life. You dragged me hither and thither, and then you came here, to this place. I've never been happy a minute since. I hate it. My life has been ruined."

David's eyes looked ages old . . . he found no answer . . . his big hands were awkwardly

crossed, one on the other. At last, with an effort, he spoke:

“Mildred, I’m sorry—I never meant——”

“Oh, well, it isn’t what anybody means, in this world! It’s whether they’ve got gumption enough to take their proper place and *be* somebody, and *do* things, and *live* somewhere!”

Her tone was so aggrieved that he looked at her almost in astonishment. She had outbreaks like this at times, but he never had seen her quite so bitter.

He rose from his chair, and came to her. “Mildred, ain’t you ever going to forgive me for not being able to be anybody but who I am? I know, Mildred, I *know* it’s hard on you: but it makes you worse, when you dwell on it. I’m sorry, and that’s all I can be, now. It’s too late.”

“David, I can’t bear any more to-night. This constant wrangling simply *wrecks* my nerves. I’m a hopeless invalid because of it. You better go. Fix my room, and go.”

With faltering steps, he did as he was bid.

When he came back, she had gotten out of her chair. “Good night, Mildred.”

“Be sure you shut the outside door so the spring lock will catch.”

Wearily, in the still night, he passed his print shop, and walked on, on, far down the railroad track. The stars were shining but dimly. The

way was dark, and he kept between the rails, stepping from tie to tie.

He walked, as he had walked many a day, and more nights than anybody knew save God, until he was so tired with thinking that he could go no farther.

He sat down beside the track and rested his body. And at last came back to his print shop with the inscrutable stars in his vision. The stars had been his friends, these many years.

CHAPTER VIII

HENRY GEIGER's hatred of Victor had grown into a passion, through the years of their boyhood rivalry. Yet, as the months went swiftly by, and their school life in Clarmont drew on to the close, Henry, as ever, was balked. To do the boy justice, it ought to be said that he suffered for the sins of others; suffered in character, disposition and even in efficiency itself because he was taught, by theory and by precept, the ideal of Force. Take what you want. Do what you want. Seize. Trample. Crush. Be All-Powerful. Possession is Justification. There is no Greed. There is no Love. There is only Divine Right, which is another name for Self. Nations have made the same colossal mistake.

Henry got scant attention from his amiable sire, these days. Geiger Senior was very busy amassing more money. He was a little disappointed in Henry, since always he required success in what one undertook. If Henry desired to get the bet-

ter of that boy Daudet, he should, in some way, have done it. It was Henry's business to get what he wanted, by *getting* it. Victor bested Henry in school, as usual. Brilliance of scholarship in Victor was but an incident. It only signified what was within.

Henry toiled long hours into the night through a sultry Southern Spring, to produce a graduation oration which should win the annual prize. Shakel helped him rehearse, that its delivery might convince the judges. Henry knew that Victor had written an oration, and he knew, too, that he was afraid of it; though he did not understand why Victor's work was always considered clever.

In Miss Madison's mind there was no doubt that Victor would win the prize. The great day came at last. To Henry it was the greatest of his life. He did his best. His laborious oration was delivered with painstaking effort. And then, with the audience in the High School Auditorium seemingly far more attentive than they had been when Henry spoke—Victor Daudet delivered his oration; delivered it with an ease which, in Henry's judgment, ought to have condemned it, because it plainly represented no such work as he had given to his oration. Henry was quite relieved, when Victor finished.—Nothing in that, he assured himself.

The judges, who were a local clergyman, Ches-

terfield Carter, and Mr. Lee, County Superintendent, retired to the anteroom, and the program went on. There had been five orations in competition for the prize. Henry's was the next to the last delivered.

. . . The judges returned to the Auditorium, after what seemed to Henry an unnecessarily long time for deliberation, and were seated until their decision should be called for, just prior to the awarding of diplomas.

Mr. Carter went to the platform to announce the decision:

"Ladies and Gentlemen:—The judges listened, as you all listened, with deep interest to the orations of the contestants. With a zealous desire on our part to award the prizes justly we have considered each oration as to substance, as to originality, as to elocution, and as to that quality which seems to us most important of all—the quality of Truth. We believe that no artifice, no smoothness, no mere cleverness, ought to rank with that evident sincerity, and that power of carrying conviction which characterize the highest type of oration. The judges were unanimous in deciding that the first prize be awarded to Mr. Victor Daudet."

(With the applause of the audience ringing in his ears, Henry Geiger suddenly felt the queerest sensation he ever had felt in his life—it seemed to him that his head swam up to the ceiling and

was suspended there and looked down at the rest of him, sitting with his class.)

"The awarding of the second prize required our particular consideration. We weighed the merits of the four orations among which our choice was to be made. Our decision was finally in favor of the oration of Mr. Henry Geiger. We congratulate Mr. Geiger, and we congratulate Mr. Daudet. And we assure the other contestants that we were pleased with the excellence of their work, and only regret that every oration could not have been awarded a prize."

So was added one more black mark against Victor Daudet. Henry Geiger never forgave and he never forgot.

Judith and Carter were much together through the festivities of "Finals" at the University in June. She stayed at the pretty home of a married friend, a girl she had known in college days. Carter came down in his machine. Once he brought Victor with him; again, another day, both David and Victor, that they might go through the University together on a tour of observation. The third time he came alone, and did not go back that night as they danced at the German until all hours.

The next afternoon he took her back to Claremont in his car.

Summer in the Blue Ridge! The sunshine was golden light. The birds sang through all the country. The air was so clear that you saw for miles. A perfect day for happiness.

Hope and love were written on Carter's face; in her eyes there dwelt a look of serene faith.

. . . "We'll know," she firmly said—"one always knows, when a decision that affects other lives than one's own must be made. A trust is a trust. It never ceases to be a trust, never ceases to be sacred. It grows more sacred to the end. You wouldn't have me regard it otherwise?"

"No—no. You couldn't. It wouldn't be you if you did. You're right, Judith, since you insist on feeling as you do—about letting me do what's necessary."

"That can't be considered. I've given you my word: Chester, everything that a man can be to me now, you are. Until I am free to give you all myself—please be happy. Life is longer than to-day and to-morrow. Dreams fulfilled are sweetest when time has made them nobler."

His eyes rested upon her, and she knew by the look he gave that his plea would not be renewed until she willed.

. . . "I'm glad you're going to teach in Charlottesville, next year," he remarked; "I'll miss you this summer. I reckon it'll be a relief to you to be rid of Shakel. You won't have to think of

coming back in the Fall, Judith!" His eyes beamed his satisfaction, and he added: "Two good reasons for you to be in Charlottesville. One is yours truly, if you'll allow me to allow myself the compliment,—and the other is Victor. I can run down from Clarmont once in a while to give a lady a ride, and Victor can drop in to see you occasionally."

"I'm glad he's through with Clarmont—with school there. I'm very glad. It's been a test for him. A hard test for a boy to go through!"

"He's been up to it!" Carter said, with ringing satisfaction in his voice. "He'll make good at the University."

BOOK III
THE AMERICAN

CHAPTER I

ANYBODY with one eye open and the other narrowed to a slit could have seen that Henry Geiger intended to get the things that make one a big fellow at the University. To Get:—that was the idea.

To grow, and to obtain for all time a sense of Relative Values should be the justification of University Education. But, first of all, one must Be.

Henry “made” a fairly good second-rate Greek Letter fraternity before he had been long at the University. He went out for athletics, being football material, and he believed before the season was over that he had gotten a sufficient pull with the Coach to get on the Varsity next year. His way that first year was ordered with discretion, and with devotion to the idea of getting what he wanted. He studied methodically and hard. It was satisfactory to Henry that the distances and distinctions at the University kept him well apart from Victor Daudet. The fatality which had

linked their lives too closely in the narrow confines of school seemed at least to be lessened. Henry kept a sharp eye out, and knew what Victor was doing, but he did not have to be reminded every day.

Victor? His new life? It was like escaping from a prison cell where bean soup which was constantly being burnt by the cook was the best pabulum afforded. (Shakel being the cook.) By contrast it was like finding that you could cavort in a grand stadium which was entirely lined with lemon-custard pie.—And having a perfectly fine appetite!

Victor enjoyed everything at the University. He loved its atmosphere; its dignity, its simplicity, the daily courtesy, the fine men and fine minds of the faculty, and he loved his fellows. Victor was soon "bid" by one of the best of the Greek Letter fraternities at the University. No boy was in the least likely to be asked to join unless he possessed personality, and fineness, and that was exactly what Chesterfield Carter had known when he suggested to the young gentlemen of his own fraternity that they take a good look at Mr. Daudet.

Swiftly flew the year away, and the following summer with David at the print shop soon passed. Victor became a "second-year" man, rooming in

the fraternity house, after his first year in Dawson's Row.

We present Mr. Daudet, in his room, which was his castle, on a rainy evening in October; outside the night was dark; the wind was moaning, and driving the rain against the panes, but within there was light, and comradeship. A young Virginian named Bruce Taylor was lying in the window seat; Warren, a medical school man, was smoking a pipe dreamily and contentedly, and Victor himself was plucking the strings of a guitar—which instrument made a pleasing accompaniment to his clear, even voice as he sang Kipling's "The Ladies."

The Sophomore is the serenest joy-type in American college life. Sufficient, and unafraid. Glad; tremendously philosophical. Victor possessed the nonchalant grace of manner which a gentleman should have at that stage of his development. And he wore a strange necktie. As we go on, we cultivate the familiar; seek it, choose it; the Sophomore is entitled to choose the startling, the gorgeous and the gallant in neckgarb, and generally does so. Heaven bless the Sophomore! And Heaven protect him, for he knows too much to protect himself. Ah, well, one has to learn. When you fall down, get up!

. . . Mr. Daudet put his guitar in the corner of his pennant-emblazoned room. He now stretched

to his full height luxuriously, glanced in the mirror on his dresser, remarked that by Jove! he needed a shave—a Sophomore would be quite broken up if he had no cause to consider such need—and then, with profound ease and scintillant but harmless cynicism, elaborated to his comrades his theories with regard to the fair sex. The conversation was enriched by remembrance on part of all three young gentlemen of a motor trip to a dance at Sweet Briar, sixty miles away, on the preceding Saturday.

You know how it goes. Sophomore dreams have to do with ruffles and fluffles and pink: pink cheeks; with eyes—orbs that are soulful in the dance's maze. With clinging hands and dainty feet; with looks and sighs, and subsequent impassioned letter writing. (Victor had four in his pocket).

The duty of settling to a nicety the Woman question was performed with elegance and dispatch—it took only half an hour, which is not long when you consider the baffling nature of the problem as it appears to those of us who do not know.

His fraternity brethren having betaken themselves to their rooms to grind, Victor divested himself of superfluous garments, stepped into a bath robe, and sat at his desk to work. Having a good gift of concentration, he accomplished his task with precision and celerity. By midnight

he had finished his theme—a paper on a special assigned topic in Economics.

It was fated that the harmless theme was to get Victor into the limelight, next day.

CHAPTER II

HAVING been at the Colonnade Club and then at another Club late the night before, the Professor of Economics called upon members of his class to read their themes. Professors are but human, and a gentleman is quite right in preferring that the class be taught through one another instead of listening to himself when the morning is young and one requires time to "get going." Any able Professor will agree to that.

The first man up was Taylor; Mr. Taylor's treatment of the topic was genuinely sophomoric; otherwise not remarkable. The Professor gazed over his class, and his eye lighted upon Mr. Henry Geiger, whom he had previously noted to be a painstaking student. He felt, however, that his own mentality was not sufficiently alert this dark, rainy morning to follow with pleasure the ponderosities of Henry's reasoning processes. His eye traveled again, and fell upon Mr. Daudet, whose face attracted him.

“Mr. Daudet.”

Victor began reading his theme to the class. His argument was well conceived, and his method daring. He cut straight through to the core of his topic with a brilliant interpretation and a luminous exposition.

Henry Geiger listened with mingled disgust and dismay, and a rising indignation, at the unheard of and surely untenable position taken by Daudet. As he sat there, his face darkening at every thrust of light and reason, all the bitter dislike of years welled in his heart. Henry and Victor had not a class together their first year at the University. Now, it seemed, they were again to be in conflict.

Conflict it was: Henry could scarcely wait for the conclusion of Victor's paper to make a disputatious attack upon it, which he was able to do under guise of seeking information from the Professor respecting a certain point. The Professor invited Mr. Daudet to answer the query, and he did so. Henry now launched a series of questions intended to confound the author and to belittle his position; to make ridiculous such a position. Henry was quite sincere. Victor's striking originality seemed to him, as he understood the matter under discussion, an outrageous aberration from sense and Authority.

The Professor, now keenly alive and interested

by Victor's presentation, did not deny free opportunity for discussion. Henry disputed stoutly, and finally became so evidently incensed at the quick and conclusive answers made to his objections that the Professor thought to smooth the troubled waters by asking Henry to read his own paper. He read with gusto, in a loud tone of voice which made that class sit up and take notice. He would show them. Not only did he have the opposite (and to his mind the only possible view) but he was able to cite Authorities, big Authorities, in support. He drove on and on, and concluded his paper with half a dozen heavy citations. Looking at Victor in triumph, he sat down.

Victor asked permission to reply. So clearly had Henry shown by his manner a personal antagonism to Mr. Daudet that the Professor regretted, for a moment, that Mr. Daudet wished to answer. The class was tense.

"You may substantiate your position, Mr. Daudet."

"To do that is it proper to expose the fallacies of the paper just read?" queried Victor.

"If necessary."

With a mind so clear that Professor and class alike listened in admiration, Victor tore Henry's argument to shreds; impaled his reasoning; set at naught the wordy citations because they were

not applicable to the muddled and false Premise with which Henry started and upon which he had builded. Victor's attack was purely intellectual; coldly, calmly, cleanly logical. And startlingly destructive of Mr. Geiger's weighty paper.

When he had finished, Henry was too furious to have ordinary sense.

"He thinks he has hurt my argument because he has become disagreeable!" he declared, in a loud tone.

Professor and class heard the remark in amazement. There was a dramatic rush. Victor might easily have replied in kind; it was a temptation . . . he flushed. . . . In a quiet tone, he said, finally, "The question now raised by Mr. Geiger is not Economic in the strictest sense, I believe, and I beg the indulgence of the class to answer it as I choose!" His eyes sought those of the Professor.

—"You—you may answer!" said the Professor, whose idea of justice was positive.

Victor arose, looked at the class, and shrugged his shoulders slightly and smiled. He looked at Henry, and smiled. And he said absolutely nothing . . . if the atmosphere had been tense before, it was superlatively tense now. . . . Henry Geiger reddened until his very eyes were red . . . the whole class was looking at him . . . he could endure it no longer . . . he would have sprung at

Victor's throat if he had not done exactly what he did . . . he left the lecture room.

The door closed behind him.

"Mr. Geiger has answered himself," said Victor.

In football scrimmage on a slippery field that afternoon Henry Geiger showed up well. The coach was trying him out at end for the 'Varsity. He played like mad, and that day "cinched the position." Henry was a powerful fellow—beefy, but not too beefy, capable of taking hard knocks without feeling them, and had learned under excellent coaching to be quick. There is no doubt that he proved himself fairly to be the best man for the berth. A game was scheduled for the next day, Saturday, which was of importance. The season was sufficiently along so that the best of the minor teams were being met, in preparation for the big and all-important games to come,—Vanderbilt, at Charlottesville, Yale at New Haven, and, to close the season, North Carolina, the annual Thanksgiving Day fixture at Richmond.

Virginia Military Institute had an unusually strong team that year, and gave the University enough to do to beat them 7-0. Indeed, everyone who saw the game realized that Geiger's playing was all that saved Virginia from a blank score. He was easily the star of the day, and was ac-

corded all the recognition he could have asked.

Henry had been slightly conscious of a certain aloofness on the part of those of his fellows with whom he had endeavored to converse after his classroom dispute with Victor, but, very much pleased with himself now, he tried to dismiss that episode as of minor importance. The news of it had quietly gone through the University, though; there was only one opinion about it, and that a very definite one, which all the star football playing in the world could not have dispelled.

Henry gave himself the pleasure of going down town early Saturday night with several members of his fraternity who were not over anxious to have him along. Yet they could do nothing but tolerate his presence, and listen to his comments on himself and the football game. In front of the most pretentious and brilliantly lighted movie theatre entrance of the town, they encountered a party which included Victor Daudet. The sidewalk was crowded, and Henry—through no fault of his own, be it said—was jostled against Victor. As their eyes met, every atom of antagonism which Henry ever had for Victor, and had harbored through the years, leaped like fire within him. The boyhood impulse to call Victor a “fool” on the instant obliterated time: “You fool—you ASS!” His words rang out sharply.

Both groups of boys surrounded them. The in-

sult was so open and rank that all eyes were turned upon Victor.

Victor's shoulders involuntarily squared: his voice was even: "I extend you my sympathy."

Undying hatred glittered in Henry's eyes. One of his own fraternity men seized his arm: "Don't queer yourself, Geiger! If you have any regard for your friends, be a gentleman!"

They got him away. Raging within, angered against Victor even far more than he had been angered the day before in classroom, Henry walked gloomily back to his fraternity house amongst his fellows. They hardly spoke to him all the way.

CHAPTER III

HER eyes (Victor thought) were of the peculiarly heavenly blue which one sees best a little after dawn, when the violet-purple has given place, and yet there lingers the memory of it. He was not unacquainted with dawn, having often arisen early to study when the fraternity house was still. There comes a time in the life of every man when the study of books is unregretfully laid aside for the nonce in favor of the study of eyes.

He met her at a Country Club dance. She wore some filmy sort of dress which was of no particular color in comparison with her eyes. Those eyes were appealing, and irresistible. They looked at one in the dance, trusted one as one returned their look, and besought one never, never to forget, and never to go far away, or to cease thinking of the girl whose eyes they were.

Her cheeks were tinted with the rose color which should have been fittingly bestowed upon cheeks like hers; her voice was gentle, and had a

husky-sweet little catch in it when she spoke softly to one who might be near . . . and Dear. Victor considered her figure was perfect. Of course it was. How else could she have attained Grace so superb? Even through Victor's wise and observant vision, an angel must have seemed:—less fair; less appealingly trustful; very, very much less interesting; altogether less alluring. And no one ever had eyes like hers.

No more can you bid Love forever be sleeping than you may command Niagara to cease its eternal flow. The greatest, and withal the truest force in Life is Love. So Victor, at last, knew full well. Annabelle Moore was not less attracted by Victor than he by her, if he could read aright. Until now he never had given serious thought to womankind: he had not held them lightly, but certainly he had considered them apart from any relation to his own life. Here he was, face to face with Reality. When this comes, one wonders, for a little, in a strange ecstatic daze, accepts, and suddenly throws all else to the winds until one's fate is sealed for good or for ill. We dream of no ill when we Love.—Or we should not declare ourselves.

The scene of Victor's declaration was in the softly lighted parlor of the relative whom Annabelle had been visiting in Charlottesville for the past two weeks, and that same parlor had known

of Victor on a rapid succession of evenings. He was not the sort to stay away from a girl because he feared lest he love her.

“Annabelle!”

“Victor.” She spoke his name with that strange little catch in her voice which had so enthralled him—long ago, it seemed.

“Annabelle!” he repeated.

“Victor!” she answered.

“I *adore* you—you know?”

She breathed softly, looked down at her own white hand which lay confidently in his, and then her eyes gazed into his, and he was lost in their strange glory—“I adore you beyond all words, all hopes, all hearts, all life—I love you with a love that I never knew could be—Annabelle!”

Not uncertainly she yielded . . . her sweet lips found their way to his lips seeking hers . . . the long kiss of youth and love.

So wonderfully she breathed in his masterful arms that, as she gave herself to him, he felt a thrill of responsibility, and a joy of acceptance so complete that his life was inspired. . . .

Let the hour be sacred.

Love will not be denied. The mere paltry details of ways and means, coincident circumstances and consequential results hold little of interest for lovers. Love itself rules. To Victor, the fact

that he was but beginning the second year of his University career mattered not. Years fleet in fancy when one Loves. Years are not. 'Tis Now.

Miss Moore lived in Richmond. That was unfortunate, but not insurmountable. She was a little older than Victor; an only child, and her mother was a widow:—charming, gentle, sweet, refined, desirable, and compassionate. No doubt could there be as to that, for one does not conceive of the mother of a girl like Annabelle as aught but nearly perfect.

When, after a few more days of the delights and confidences of those who have found love, Victor was obliged at last to say good-bye at the train, and she was borne away, the boy began straightway to dream. But he could dream to a purpose, could Victor. He took to his books manfully, attended to his duties, laid up store for Life—and, of course, wrote and received letters, many letters.

In the ardor and intensity of youth, letters cannot be all, cannot suffice all. A raw autumn wind was blowing pitilessly, and the stripped trees outside the window of his room were darkly, fantastically, almost personally mournful, on a certain evening when she had been gone only a little while, and Victor, as he never had felt it in his life before felt the necessity, nay, the crying need, to hear the voice of a woman, and to look into a

woman's eyes. When we have awakened, we need. The answering maternal in a woman who is true and good does often soothe.

Victor suddenly knew that he wanted to call upon Miss Madison. He had seen her but twice since the beginning of the session. He found in her welcome to him the same graciousness and unalterable friendliness that she had for him always. They were soon seated in her study—she was at the head of a girl's private boarding-school on the outskirts of Charlottesville this year—and in no time he was talking to her as eagerly as of old.

"Yes, it's a fine life at the University. One understands and values its privileges even more the second year."

"Mr. Carter tells me you've been taken by the Academic Society he hoped you'd be asked by. May I congratulate you?"

"Thank you. Yes, I appreciate it. It's most kind of the men."

"Your time must be filled—with your duties and your honors. We're more pleased than you know, perhaps, to see them come to you, Victor."

"One gets lonely at the University, at times, though."

She waited.

"You'd hardly think it, would you?"

"Life is never quite full enough so that one doesn't sometimes dream."

"One certainly does, at times. Do you know, I met a Miss Moore a few weeks ago. She was visiting here in Charlottesville. Her home is in Richmond. You don't by any chance know the Moores, in Richmond—Annabelle's mother is a widow, I believe. The late Mr. Moore was identified with brokerage interests, or something—so I've heard. You never have met the Daughter, have you?"

"No. I don't recall such a family. But I'm little acquainted in Richmond." She smiled encouragingly, as a lady may.

"Annabelle—er—Miss Moore—is a *Wonderful* girl. Different. Quite different from any girl I ever met. You'd like her. She—h-m—she dances divinely—and she has the most magnificent eyes—Oh, as to that, she's very beautiful—accomplished, too. Has a way with her. Not merely style, you know—but grace, poise, remarkable intelligence, and an appealing quality—very gentle. Voice. Remarkable speaking voice, and, in fact, attractive. Magnetic, I should say, rather. Simply wins one, and as one comes to know her better—well, one is Captivated—h-m—to an unusual degree. One's interest is bound by her qualities of mind and soul—along with her Beauty—transcendent beauty, I should say. You see how one

might be more than ordinarily interested?"

Miss Madison saw. She realized intuitively that here was a case where only Destiny would win. She looked keenly at Victor, and wondered. What a fine forehead the boy had! His face was alight, and his dark eyes shone with his story.

"Victor."

"Yes, Miss Madison."

"Miss Moore is a college girl?"

"I believe she is not."

"But interested in University affairs, *of course*. I might know, without asking, that a young lady of culture and refinement could not be otherwise than interested—I'm dreadfully stupid, to have asked you such a question."

Victor assured her that he had never known her to be stupid in her life. And as for Annabelle—er—Miss Moore—she would, he was positive, be the first person in the world to be honored by friendship with *his* friend, Miss Madison!

You have known in your life how grateful it is possible to feel when an overpowering sense of loneliness has been relieved by a good woman. When you have gone to her yearning, and have come away quietly glad—ready to live on, and to wait; to hope; and sure that all's well in the world. So, that night, Victor felt. He left Miss Madison with a little of the soul-light that was ever in her eyes down deep in his heart.

CHAPTER IV

As the football season progressed it was evident that Virginia had one of the most powerful and versatile elevens that had represented the University for years. On one Saturday they tied Yale 6—6 in the "Bowl" at New Haven. It was a battle royal, with Henry Geiger starring conspicuously; his name was in the papers as one of the finds of the season and a probable All-American man. On the next Saturday Virginia played the heavy and clever Vanderbilt team at Charlottesville and won, 20—0. Henry's play at end that day was superb. The great crowd at the game went wild over his exploits: every ounce of energy in his powerful legs and shoulders was driven to perfection. If plaudits could make Henry happy, he must have been happy that day. Chesterfield Carter came down from Clarmont, and was at the game with Miss Madison.

That evening they were together again; he had asked that he might come to the school to see her.

She lighted the reception room before he came with soft colored candles. Would the glaring incandescents have shown a deepening line or two of those that were stealing into her face?

"There's been little said between us, Judith, of the way our lives with regard to one another are going. I'm speaking of it now on your account, and on mine. Judith, do you consider me unfair?"

"You have kept good faith with me. It is your right to ask me what you will." She looked earnestly into Carter's face. It was a little careworn; the lines were deeper. Gray was beginning to show plainly in his tawny hair. The ruddiness of his complexion could not disguise that.

"I want a wife."

"It is your right, Chester."

"A perfectly simple problem is wrecking—at least is harming our two lives; why should it?"

Her eyes looked away: her bosom softly rose and fell. She answered him very gently: "I do not know that I am fitted to be a wife. All my life has been given to other thoughts and other work than home-making. With your constantly growing interests and responsibilities you need, and you deserve a wife who could be all in all to you; who could help you, rest you,—care for your weariness instead of adding to it. Chester, you won't mistake my motive: we've been too dear,

Can you understand me when I say I love you well enough to give you up?"

"I know you right well, Judith. You can't close my lips any longer because you are so conscientious that what you say commands me. We're going to consider the material aspect of the problem tonight,—now. Here it is: your sense of filial duty is so strong, and so good, that you'd rather go on sacrificing yourself than be under the necessity of accepting from me, if you were my wife, the little I'd ask you to take for those who are dear to you. They would be dear to me. If you were my wife, it would be a deep pleasure for me to know that your parents had from me through you everything they've ever had from you—ample means for their comfort and happiness. That would be my right, Judith. It is my right."

"You can't quite understand, Chester. Let me try to help you see: Father and Mother are like children, now. Children, who look simply and trustingly to me as—as the fairy in their lives, I think. They have no thought or care, save to live serenely on, clinging to one another, while the shadows slowly lengthen. They're there at the old home—the only home they've ever known. It was mine with them. They think of it as ours always; theirs and mine. I've never spoken of marriage to them. They don't think of it in con-

nection with me. Life seems fixed, to them. If I were to marry, it would be to them as though the world had ended——”

“But Judith!” he interrupted—“can’t you understand that I’d be willing for you to go home at least as much as you’ve been able to do for years?”

“And take to them your bounty, instead of mine. At risk of wounding your generous spirit, I must tell you that their gentle pride is so inborn and deep that they’d sooner die than take, and realize they were taking, what to them would seem—Charity.”

“Oh, Judith, I’m sorry.”

“It’s true.”

“Will you let me think further, and talk to you again when I’ve thought?”

“There is no way but the one, Chester; no way but for me to do my duty. You wouldn’t have me wound to the death those dear souls who made me, who trust me as they trust God, and who would feel, if I married, that I’d deserted them?”

“They don’t realize the sacrifice you make.”

“No, in justice I must say, that I reckon they don’t know anything about it. They think of me as happy and successful in my work—as their daughter of whom they are proud. Nothing more.”

“Judith, have I forfeited at any time since I

told you I loved you, any portion of your—your esteem for me?”

“You needn’t call it esteem, only. I’ve loved you more with each day. I love you now. Chester, I can say no more.” She held out her hands in supplication: he rose from his chair, and opened his arms wide to her. She arose, and he enfolded her, and buried his face in her hair. . . . She was crying softly. . . .

“No woman in the world but you,—Judith. I am yours until Eternity.”

. . . A little after, he left her.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN a young gentleman who is madly in love has been idealizing the object of his affections for weeks; when he has been looking forward to the incomparable joy of seeing her as a traveler over a desert looks forward to journey's end; when, besides, the lover has impulsively decided to surprise his love by calling hours before she had expected him to call—of course he is not, because of all his anticipation and his delight, one whit better prepared to be utterly astonished by a series of incidents in themselves astounding.

Victor went to Richmond, after saving every cent for weeks so that he might go, the afternoon before Thanksgiving. Miss Moore expected him, as per letter, to call upon her at one on Thanksgiving Day, to take her out to dinner, and then escort her to the Virginia-North Carolina football game.

It lacked a few minutes of six when Victor reached Miss Moore's residence at 201 East —

Street. It did not seem to be a residence. A woman who bore all the marks of a rooming-house person answered his ring, and, in response to his inquiry for Miss Moore, said, after looking hastily from hall into parlor, where a shrill card game between opposite sexes was going on, "Ah reckon you-all can go up. Miss Annabelle an' her maw is in—third door to yo'r right, third floor."

He climbed.

. . . "Annabelle, f'r the love of *Gawd!* DON'T sit on them beans!"

If he had not rapped on the door at the precise moment the ejaculation rang out—he would have known what to do.

When the door was opened a couple of seconds later, it was evident to Mr. Daudet that the *pièce de résistance* of their supper—a pan of hot beans—had been transferred momentarily to a cushioned chair lest it burn the surface of their dining table. Annabelle's mother still held in her grasp the tablecloth which she had been about to spread when her daughter so nearly erred.

That both Victor and the daughter were at least glad that she had not sat upon the beans was perhaps as much as anything the impression their faces conveyed: no words can convey the tender tone of regret (at something or other) with which Miss Moore, in that speaking voice of hers, said:—"Victor! We were having—we were going to

have—we—*won't* you have a bite to eat with us—
—we—we weren't going out to dine tonight! I'm
so glad to see you!—Mother, let me present my
friend Mr. Daudet!" Mrs. Moore had hastily
caught up her hair, which she had been wearing
in a braid down her back; she gave Victor a hand
which he instinctively felt was offered him be-
cause she chose to do so rather than deny Anna-
belle's implied wish at that particular moment.

It was evident that she did not in any sense
consider that it belonged to him, so hastily was it
withdrawn. The lines at the corners of Mrs.
Moore's mouth were cut in closely, and she
glanced at Victor sharply; from eyes which were
by no means the eyes of Annabelle; remarking,
"Yes, do. I'm sure. We'll be happy to have
you."

. . . Happy to have him what? thought Victor.
Oh, yes, Annabelle had asked him to sup with
them. . . .

"Thank you."

Annabelle's face was the color of a very fine
afterglow when the sun has set quite crimson.
You know the afterglow is redder than the
sun. . . .

"Surely, I—h-m, you *must* pardon my dropping
in upon you.. . . She—the lady—the woman down
stairs sent me up——"

"Oh, surely, *surely*. Quite right of you, Mr.

Daudet!" said Mrs. Moore, spreading the tablecloth with a sudden swish; Annabelle was at the mirror, fixing her hair, pinning her kimono more securely about her neck . . . something. . . . Victor's eye traveled helplessly from Annabelle at the mirror to the bed in the alcove. A heap of lingerie graced bed and environs. He turned quickly about and sat down, at the window. . . . One could look out.

"Victor, you just *must* forgive me for being so stupid as not to have known you'd plan this perfectly *splendid* little surprise for me!" said Annabelle, coming beside him, and taking his hand. (Mrs. Moore had gone to the mirror.)

"Annabelle, I——"

"Boysie!" she said, in an undertone; and looked into his eyes—"Kiss me!"

Victor glanced hastily toward the mirror. . . . Mrs. Moore had left there. He noted that the portiere was drawn across the alcove. . . . Annabelle kissed him. . . . Annabelle ran her fingers through his hair. She laid her hand confidently in his. The nails slightly needed cleaning.

"How, oh, how unforgivingly thoughtless I am!" she suddenly remarked. "Do give me your overcoat!"

"Thank you." He arose, and slipped out of it. She took that, and his hat, which reposed on a small stand by the window, and—disappeared be-

hind the portiere. Mrs. Moore came forth, in a moment. She wore an elaborate tea-gown—pink, with a tremendously shirred flounce. . . . “Won’t you look at the evening paper?” she remarked, handing him a *News-Leader* from the top of the waste basket beneath the stand.

“Thank you.”

Mrs. Moore spread the table rather busily as to manner; somewhat scantily as to china. Three plates were three plates, though: the silver was brought from the dresser drawer. Victor thought he—yes, he did see Annabelle’s figure flit like a wraith from portiere to door, and through it. She wore street costume. He read the paper assiduously. Mrs. Moore toasted some bread on the gas range and made cocoa.

He read an editorial. No doubt it was a sound one. He turned to the sporting page, and was reading for the ninth time the line-up for the morrow’s game when Annabelle came in, bearing gifts—ice cream and cakes, he couldn’t but fancy.

They sat at table presently. Annabelle’s face was a pretty glow. She talked rapidly. They ate beans, and toast, and had cocoa. Also ice cream and cake.

Mother glanced at Victor about one hundred times, he imagined. It was always a glance; never a sustained look. She remarked, finally, “There’s

a perfectly gorgeous picture at the Lyric tonight, Annabelle."

"The movies!" explained Annabelle, in a trice.

"May we not go?" queried Victor, politely.

Mrs. Moore declined (fervently) to go. Annabelle was indeed delighted to accept.

And thus they who loved had their evening together. It was past eleven when he brought her home, and straightway departed for his hotel.

When Victor went to 201 East — Street next day, to take Annabelle out to dinner, he did not meet Mrs. Moore, as Annabelle was waiting for him at the street door when he arrived. But here's another thing,—probably of little consequence save that it helped make Victor peculiarly reticent on the way down town: as they left the house, and had turned the corner and crossed the street, Annabelle looked over and up, at the window of Mrs. Moore's apartment. Victor's glance involuntarily followed. Mrs. Moore was sitting at the window, reading a newspaper. . . . Unless his eyes utterly deceived him she placed in her mouth—for the briefest instant, yet long enough to produce an appreciable cloud of smoke—something which closely resembled a cigarette.

It has been argued against University education

that it tends to make one hypercritical. Rub out the black mark:—so does Temperament, which is not a bad thing. At dinner, in a charmingly secluded alcove where an obsequious waiter was present with his obsequiousness only when wanted, Annabelle and Victor exchanged language. It was hardly an even barter. She gave more than he. Victor found himself analyzing what Miss Moore said. Manner was as pretty as ever; he never before had especially noted matter. Her Voice, there in the reasonably close communion of their juxtaposition, should have been as engaging as ever, yet it was not. Was its tonal quality changed? Did it lose something because she dwelt so superlatively upon current movies, latest dances, and her delightful assurances that Richmond was a perfectly lovely city in which to live, and that Victor ought by all means to come there, so that they might be together “forever and ever and ever!” (Eyes, here.)

. . . For dessert they had an ice.

Everything seemed fated to be dismal that day. When they emerged from the restaurant it was beginning to rain, and when they reached the scene of the great football game, and were at last packed in among the waving pennants and the cheering thousands, and saw the rival teams come forth upon the field, it was raining. Raining steadily. Fortunately they sat in covered stands,

The game started in the rain, and developed into a tragedy for Virginia's adherents. Unquestionably one of the best teams in the East that year, yet Virginia was beaten before her men had been ten minutes in the fray. Virginia's goal line had been kept inviolate the entire season; a couple of field goals was all that even Yale could do: any first class team, however, could have trounced Virginia on Thanksgiving Day, for the men had gone hopelessly "stale." Keyed twice to tremendous effort for Yale and Vanderbilt, and then driven far too hard by the coach in the attempt to key them for the third time in little more than three weeks, Virginia's men could not do it. North Carolina, always a gritty aggregation of players, had no great repertoire of plays, but they drove them perfectly. They had done practically nothing else for the season but prepare for Virginia, and every man was in superb condition. Virginia's fast back could do nothing on the slippery gridiron. Her big guard slumped. Henry Geiger, All-American end, went down with the wreck of his team. Carolina scored 7 the first quarter; 7 the next quarter. Again 7 almost as soon as they returned to the rain-drenched field after the first half; and 7 more the last period. Twenty-eight to nothing. It was too bad! Drear silence, save for an occasional groan, reigned amongst the Virginia cohorts. To see a team,

though it was a sportsmanlike and deserving one, beat a team which at top form wouldn't have given it a look-in was—oh, if you've ever seen such an upset you know how chilling and unsatisfactory it is!

. . . The agony was over at last. In the swiftly falling rain Victor and Annabelle left the grounds, and were soon packed into a car with other mortals.

It was necessary for him, he told her, to catch the evening train out of Richmond for Charlottesville. Yes, he simply must go. She graciously accepted his apologies, and down town he put her on a car for her residence, saying farewell as he kept an umbrella over her pretty figure while she held her skirts and—"Good bye, Dear!"

"Good bye," he soberly answered.

Victor made the train with one minute to spare. He found a seat in the coach with the solemn players, and the journey to Charlottesville was begun.

Nobody talked much, after the first hour. Victor went forward into the next coach: and pondered deeply, as he looked out of the car window into the night. Victor was disappointed. His trip to Richmond had been a disappointment. To pick a Winner—Horse, Eleven or Lady—and see it lose before your very eyes, has a depressing effect. Life is a funny game.

CHAPTER VI

MR. DAUDET had been wont to consult the poets. Shelley, Poe, Lamartine and Tom Moore had engaged his attention. He turned from these and read philosophy, biography and general literature: read widely, and intensely. The University library knew him as it never had known him before, and from Thanksgiving until the Christmas recess he covered much ground, absorbing, and considering the works of authors whose minds had been tempered by their times, their lives, and their observations.

When Victor went home at Christmas he was in a calm and settled state, quite decided as to life and its incidentals, and satisfied that he had now discovered for all time the inevitable truth in regard to the conclusions at which a reasonable person of the male sex must arrive. Could a lamp, shining on the snow, change the snow? he asked himself.

What a pleasure it was to David to see the boy!

Kind, thoughtful, dear old David! His eyes were strange wells of serenity. He had learned to the uttermost Life's lesson of Acceptance.

Victor helped him daily, and they cleared away a lot of work that had accumulated. David did not work at night, but, after caring for Mrs. Duncan came directly to the shop and sat by the fire in his big chair, while Victor drew up close beside him and they talked together more intimately, perhaps, than they had for a year. When a boy goes away to college, often, in the process of adding to his identity, he grows strange to the folk at home. And then—he begins to come back, and to get closer. Victor was coming back. The friendship and paternal affection that lived in David's heart for him suddenly was able to reach out and encompass him. Their chats were confidential, as they used to be.

One evening just after Christmas when it was snowing heavily, they sat cosily and late by the fire. David's hands were crossed on a big knee, and dreamy content rested upon his features.

Said Victor: "I think I shall never marry."

"I wouldn't be in a hurry, anyhow," David said.

"I conceive," said Victor, "that there are perilous possibilities—in the—ladies."

"Quite so," remarked David.

"A man can easily get—get *tied*, without get-

ting much else," commented Victor in an explanatory tone of voice.

"That's true," David agreed.

"If one wishes to do much in the world, he should be free to think. Now take the case of a man who wished to think, and was married to a lady who *couldn't* think. Disastrous. Entirely disastrous. A man's life would be—h-m—dished. Nullified, as it were: because the obligations of his marriage would be omnipresent and—h-m—cloying."

"Unquestionably," declared David, with a peculiarly philosophical look in his eye. He uncrossed his hands, and recrossed them on the other knee. "Victor, one can hardly be too careful in regard to entanglements. You are exactly right. Avoid them."

"Of course," Victor said, "one must. One doesn't wish to be unfair or unkind. But one should order one's conduct. If you think you like a girl, for instance, don't like her too—too fast. Use reason. Reason in all things. Politeness of course is essential, in meeting—ladies."

"Politeness doesn't necessarily entail a demonstration of affection, though. I am glad to see you have the right view, Victor."

"To be affectionate and non-committal in the same breath is a Gift; not every man has it."

David gazed ruminatively at the ceiling.

"Women are to a certain degree materialists," Victor observed; "they are by no means always idealists. Love means less than all to them."

David looked at him searchingly.

"No lady who truly loves you," continued Victor, "forgives you for not being a millionaire—but she'll take any little sum you have between nothing and a million."

David patted his big knee thoughtfully: "I rather think that may be true—in some cases. But you mustn't forget the many noble women who give up everything without asking anything in return."

"Don't you believe a young man goes it better alone?"

"Well, there's the Fish," remarked David—"he swims alone."

"And gets there!"

"A man is entitled to be always on his guard; it's better to be locked out, than it is to be locked up," remarked David, and rose to stir the fire.

"H-m. Many sad words have been spoken by men who promised too much."

"Be conservative, in regard to womenkind," David said; "and then you harm nobody. And you don't harm yourself."

"That's the whole thing!" Victor declared in a tone of deep conviction. "Be conservative."

"I guess so," David assented; "I guess so. And I'm real interested to see how close your ideas and mine run, along these lines we've been mentioning."

"Oh, a man is bound to arrive at certain conclusions," Victor assured him.

The clock struck eleven; and Victor arose. "I'll go to bed—you're tired."

"Never too tired to talk with you, my boy." And the kindly light in the old eyes beamed upon him.

A young man who is alive and awake can not refrain from experiment and experience. Extreme follows extreme in the heyday of youth. Nearly anything is likely to provide an opportunity. Victor suffered a mild attack of diphtheria late in January, and was removed to the University hospital. It is unnecessary to dwell in detail upon the alluring and enthralling beauty of the trained nurse whose tender ministrations made Victor a well man. She was a winsome English girl, petite and low-voiced; with hazel eyes, and gentle white hands whose sympathetic touch might call attention to everything else about her that was lovely and sweet. Her name, Lily Henshaw, appealed only slightly to Victor, at first, but it grew upon him as he came to know her better, and realized how wonderful she was.

Brown hair went with her hazel eyes, and one day Victor's fingers sought a clinging tendril: and in a few minutes—he had kissed her wrist with infinite tenderness. And she murmured that she loved him.

He was much with her, after he left the hospital. Much, that is, for two weeks. It might have been longer, save that the dear girl had the care of a man of means somewhat older than Victor who proposed marriage to Miss Henshaw during his convalescence.

Which settled it.

Victor was free to attend to his scholastic duties, and did so, achieving brilliant class-room distinction in less than ten days after Miss Henshaw had told him with tears in her hazel eyes that she was going to be married.

When one is in process of achieving class-room honors, quite possibly one produces themes of such worth that one desires to have them neatly typed. This was the case with Victor, and he met, and came to know, a most beautiful stenographer down town. The episode was intense: yet let it pass. Victor did. She misspelled his words frightfully.

CHAPTER VII

THE affairs of human life never cease; and death—is an affair of life. In bleak March Victor was called suddenly home. Mildred, David's wife, had passed in the night. She had asked David to sleep on the couch in her sitting room—the first time she ever had asked him since he built the cottage for her. She had seemed, David recalled, very, very tired. When he fixed her windows before she slept, she had called him to her bedside, and said, "Good night, David." And, without her saying so, David had felt that he might kiss her forehead; which he did, and stole away.

Victor found David dazed. The big man took his hand, and clung to it, and could say nothing. All day long he sat in Mildred's cottage, alone, save when others came in for the moment, or the hour. He remained there when night came, and Victor stayed at the print shop. When Victor

went upstairs to his room, to try to sleep, he realized in a flash that it was the room where he had first seen Mildred. The memory came back to him as though the years were not, and he saw her exactly as she looked. He was a little boy, and a stranger in a strange land; and she had not been unkind to him. In her way she had been kind. Victor sat by the window, where she had sat so often when she lived over the shop. A thousand memories came to him of her, and of David, and of their strange life, and of his own life beneath that roof. . . . Looking out, his eyes fell from the cold stars in the night sky to the lighted window of the cottage, where David was. Tears coursed down his cheeks, as, suddenly thrilled by the tragedy of life and that surety of death which he never before had realized, he understood how little are the children of earth. So vividly he remembered the days of his boyhood that absolute consciousness of the strangeness of all his life took possession of him. He thought of his Father, who fell at Verdun, a soldier for France. Something noble crept into his soul. . . . He must be true, and must achieve in life, before the end came to him.

He sat there thinking for a long time, and it grew colder, for the little fire he had kindled in the wood heater to undress by had long since gone out.

In the morning when he awoke an overpowering sense of alteration and strangeness grasped him almost before his eyes were open. The hammer-strokes of workmen busily beginning their day's work on the row of new apartment houses going up a couple of hundred yards away from the print shop brought him to a realization of Life. Just as soon as he could dress he went to David.

The funeral was that day. When they came back, Victor knew that David was more lonely than he ever had been in his life. He wandered aimlessly about, and did not try to talk. When the evening hour came at which he had been wont to go to Mildred's cottage, he went over there, and went in. In a little time he came back, and sat down beside Victor. Great tears rolled down his cheeks, as his old eyes looked into Victor's face. . . . "My Boy—she—she's gone."

Victor could not answer: he could only grasp David's hand.

With the next morning's light Victor got up quickly, made the fire in the kitchen, and started breakfast while David was slowly finding his clothes for the day. Everything David tried to do seemed done with great effort and uncertainty. He was broken, as Victor never had seen him, and Victor decided he ought to stay with him the

rest of the week at least, and told him he wanted to do so.

"I guess I'd like to have you, Victor," David said. Even his voice was broken.

Victor attended to some work in the shop, finished it, and went out into the free sunshine. It was milder, today. Spring was in the air. Victor strolled from the yard, and looked about him. His eye traveled across the railroad track, and he saw Doc Murfree, chair tilted back against his unpainted dilapidated little old office. Victor thought Doc was looking at him, and waved his hand in salute, but there was no answering salutation. Victor wondered why. A man passed by on the other side of the track, quite near to Doc, and saluted him casually. Doc failed to answer that salutation, so Victor decided he was not in a companionable mood.

Doc must have had something engrossing on his mind that day, Victor believed. For he sat there practically all day; at least he was sitting there every time Victor chanced to look across.

He was sitting there in full view of passersby even up to sundown, and answered nobody's salutations. And they went on without interest or inquiry.

The next morning, Victor curiously looked over at Doc's office. He was sitting there again! A very definite impulse took Victor across the track,

and he entered the little office yard and went rapidly up to Doc Murfree. It was not Doc Murfree. It was only the husk.

Nobody had known that he was dead! Nobody had been even interested in the fact that their bare salutations went unanswered. So he had passed, the man who had long since ceased to be of the slightest use to any living soul.

Victor left the little yard, and the figure there, and ran across to David, and told him. He came quickly out of the shop again, and met a neighbor who was passing on the way to the depot. In a little while, everybody knew.

Have you never noticed that often one death in a neighborhood is closely followed by another? The rest of that week seemed to Victor unreal, haunted. Even for Doc Murfree he had a good thought now. But for Doc Murfree he never would have known David, and had David as a father.

Victor returned to the University without thought in his heart of conflict with any fellow human being. Yet he was soon cast into it. As a first-year man he had played an excellent second-base on the "scrub" baseball team. This year he was the logical candidate for 'Varsity second-baseman, and was so considered. Henry Geiger thought otherwise; he filled the place in

practice during Victor's absence in Clarmont, and was now avowedly out for the position. The day before, he had played particularly well throughout the game against the "scrubs." He had accepted all his chances without an error, making one extra hard stop, and several pretty pick ups. He had hit well, too. (But he was facing an indifferent second string pitcher.)

Henry considered that he had made an impression on the coach. He had. The coach had "sized" him accurately as a strong fellow who could play good ball when he faced easy opponents. He had nothing approaching the finish, speed, or lightning-like ability to think quickly and act on the second that Victor Daudet possessed. Nor had he that quality understandable by every man who knows baseball called baseball sense. A football man, yes. Baseball—never. Henry was out of it, relegated to the "scrubs," as soon as Victor came on the field his first day back. It angered him through and through. Why should Daudet be treated as king pin the moment he appeared, and why should he give place to him? Henry grew so bitter that he played poorly. He saw Victor, after one glaring error on an easy chance, get down to a steady, finished game that would have made a scout take notice. Victor was a daring base runner. At least he looked to be daring. Rather he was an alert one, using his judgment

to a nicety, and never letting a legitimate chance go by.

As they were coming off the field after practice, and Victor pleasantly addressed a natural remark to him about the good condition of the field and the fine weather for playing, Henry suddenly felt such a passionate antagonism, that he spoke what was in his mind on the instant: "You'll hold down second all right, with your pull with the coach."

Victor looked at him in genuine amazement. If Victor never before had felt sorry for Henry Geiger he felt so now. And the emotion showed in his face. He made no answer, but walked away, swinging his bat thoughtfully. To Henry it was maddening. He brooded over it that night, and did not go out for practice next day. Nor again. He was bitter to the end of the season. He was bitter especially when Victor starred in home games, and when his name was in the papers as starring on the trips. He had only hatred for everything in connection with Victor, or his name, or the thought of him. He was disgusted, even venomously disgusted, when Victor, in addition to his athletic honors, was made a ribbon society man:—a distinction which was very far from him. He was glad when the year was ended. And felt relieved when the thought occurred to him he would probably never again have a class with

Victor. Henry was to quit the Academic department and take Law next session, as his father had decided to make him his man of business as soon as he was capable. Geiger Senior was for utility.

CHAPTER VIII

THE summer went on wings, and Henry and Victor were at the University again; Henry to pursue legal studies exclusively, and Victor to continue his academic course, which he had carefully outlined for himself under Mr. Carter's guidance. It included advanced Economics, in which subject he found his greatest interest, and a goodly assignment of Literature and Philosophy.

Henry Geiger starred again in football that fall, and of one incident it is just to speak. He was unquestionably responsible for the winning of the Thanksgiving Day game at Richmond with North Carolina. Virginia triumphed, 14—0. Henry's play was superb, and his name was on every one's tongue. The day after his return from Richmond Victor met him on the East Lawn Walk, face to face; and thought best to say a word to him, considering that it would be barbarous not to do so.

"Henry, I understand you won the game! Please accept my congratulations."

“When I wish odds of you, I shall ask them.” And he passed on, still hating, when he might easily have accepted a friendly hail in life’s little journey. Hatred is the most painful mistake in human annals.

Victor’s third year at the University was marked by seriousness of mind; by growth; by a rapid advance toward maturity. He had already found friendships among the professors. This year at least two of the biggest men at the University asked him often to their homes, seeing in him a rare intellect and an earnestness of purpose which quickened their own interest. Victor manifested the élan of his race, and that intellectual candor which had characterized him was now more than ever stimulating, to his teachers. They gave unreservedly, and he received gratefully. He sought expression, and began to write freely. His work for the college weekly was both sound and novel. He read widely and well, using the library continuously, and informing himself on current events by means of the latest reviews and the metropolitan dailies. Newspaper reading had been a habit with him since childhood, and he knew how to weigh and digest news in relation to thought.

A new and unsought athletic honor came to him in the Spring. The captain of the Varsity base-

ball team was not, alas, so good a student as he was player, and his scholastic standing dropped to a point which induced the authorities to suggest that he depart from the academic shades. The team unanimously chose Victor to the captaincy.

Virginia took a trip to New England that year, being scheduled to play Harvard, Brown, and Yale. It was the first time Victor had been North; he was deeply observant and keenly interested. The sweep, and size of things: the ceaseless activity; the types of peoples, all so different from the easy going South, stirred him. What a wonderful country it was! Their first game was at Harvard. It was a big place; bigger even than he had suspected. The equipment of that University was wonderful. The atmosphere of Cambridge he did not understand; perhaps the great number of students had something to do with the prevailing lack of any apparent interest in fellow human beings. No one seemed to know anyone else, or to be concerned with matters mundane. He failed to discover any sort of emotion there. They beat Harvard at baseball, 8—0.

They went on to Providence. Victor liked Brown. He received an impression of sound worth. The place was friendly, and intensely alive. Among all the buildings, new and old, on front, middle or third campus, that which inter-

ested him most was ancient University Hall. French and American troops were there quartered together during the American Revolution, and Victor read the commemorative tablet with appreciation and pride.

"*Dulce et Decorum Est pro Patria Mori.*" He read the words with a thrill; his heart throbbed; he realized that he was an American.

Brown beat Virginia 1—0 in a brilliant eleven-inning game which it was an honor to win or lose. They went on to New Haven. Yale was expansive; a big institution with an atmosphere of enterprise and sincerity. They beat Yale 2—1 in a fast game. Victor had the honor of making the clean, sharp hit which scored runners on second and third. Yale men were good sportsmen; they offered no alibi. The Virginians returned to Charlottesville through New York, and Victor, with a couple of teammates, stopped over for two days, and he looked upon the wonders of the Metropolis, which made a profound impression upon him. New York, he decided, was American, yet un-American; it seemed a tribute to the genius of the American people that they could own such a stupendous city as their metropolis and keep there in the vast throngs of aliens a spirit of Americanism.

At the beginning of summer, economic and po-

litical conditions in America became matters of gravest concern. Strikes, lockouts, a railroad situation that afforded disastrous opportunities for playing politics, and every kind of labor dispute; want and acute distress; these had constituted the troubled economic history of the United States since the close of the European war.

In the midst of alarms and confusion the political conventions of both parties were held in June. During the summer the country was wrought to a high pitch by incessantly increasing industrial difficulties. Conditions could hardly be kept in abeyance much longer.

The issues of the campaign were studied intently by Victor. When he returned to the University in the fall he plunged into it there. He spoke, and developed speedily a good gift of public speaking. He organized; and enlisted the services of speakers who felt in the emergency it was patriotic to be independent. Purely partisan and sectional politics were no longer obligatory, in the Year of Grace 1924.

Virginia was pre-eminently an American commonwealth, and it looked as though that oldest state of the South would upset political traditions. So it proved. In an exceedingly close election, "The Solid South" was broken. The long entrenched Democratic party was defeated. It is

conceivable that the influence which had crept out from the University of Virginia turned the tide.

Victor Daudet, in any case, had reaped the good of fighting hard for a cause in which he believed sincerely.

It makes any young man a better American to fight for his party, if he believes. Take your choice. It is yours to make the future of your party and your country.

Henry Geiger did not play football his last year at the University. He had failed, for some reason which he could not fathom, of election to the captaincy of the football team, a reward he had coveted, and for which he had schemed and labored. He chose to play no more; and toiled through the year at Law, that he might pass the State Bar examinations. His father, with multiplying interests, probably was become the richest man in that section of the state, and needed Henry's services in business. A just return for the money that had been spent upon him.

Victor's last year was his busiest. As Editor-in-Chief of *College Topics* he had much to do. He took all the courses offered in the University School of Journalism, and learned, no doubt, as much as it is possible to learn away from the fascinating sound of the linotype and the presses and

the smell of ink that makes a willing slave of a good worker.

At Victor's graduation in June were three persons who, more than all others that knew him and believed in him, rejoiced in his honors. To David, Victor was as own son. To Victor, David was his greatest Friend. The kind old eyes were filled with serene happiness.

Happiness dwelt in the hearts of Chesterfield Carter, and Judith. They were there as man and wife. In April her dear ones, within a few days of one another, had gone peacefully from their dreamy life to the Beyond. She had laid them away with tears; and with affection unending. Nobler light never shone in woman's eyes than shone in hers as the bride of the man who had loved her faithfully and long.

The presence and the happiness of his friends gave Victor a joy deep beyond words. Life lay before him fair as a promised land.

BOOK IV
THE TEST

CHAPTER I

Two years and a half after Victor had departed from Virginia for New York on the advice of Chesterfield Carter to "learn the newspaper game at headquarters" he knew enough less than when he was graduated from college so that there was a brilliant future before him.

They all go through the process—those bright young fellows who come to New York to be christened, chastened and instructed. What they get from the metropolis is appreciably more than they give to it. They give what they have, to be sure; and if they have enough brains, vitality and purpose, they reap disillusionment, capacity, acceptance, determination, endurance and character.

Victor had not lost his idealism; but it was tempered; though unalterably fixed by his heritage, his personal history and his training; and proved not a fanciful but a practical guide for conduct and continued growth. Growth is a habit,

and Victor possessed it, and was possessed by it. He was old for his years. Many men of thirty have less poise, and few of that age have attained as good mastery over themselves. It showed in his face; the lines at the corners of his mouth bespoke resolve, not the cynicism too often seen in the earliest lines that appear on a young man's face. His very black hair had thinned a little, just a little, and New York had put a faint streak of gray at the temples. His forehead was unlined, yet looked as though there was something back of it. Victor had taken on weight, with the intensity of his life and work. One hundred and seventy pounds, now. He weighed a hundred and fifty-five as Captain of the University baseball team.

Newspaper work was to his liking, and his advancement had been steady because his vigilance never flagged. Having served his cub apprenticeship faithfully, opportunities came rapidly. A good sense of the dramatic and a clever pen speedily trained by blue pencil to drop exuberances, made him an excellent "Human Interest" man. He studied the types, the ways, the tragedies, the comedies and the life of the metropolis. He "covered" a big murder trial in a way that attracted the attention of another and much better paper, and that paper presently gave him a daily "column"—which he was able to make distinctive.

Six months later they increased his salary by a half and told him to write editorial paragraphs, which he did; and made mistakes; and profited by them. He wrote a review of a state political situation which pleased the office well enough so that he was taken inside. Politics was to Victor the most interesting of all fields.

Victor had survived the horrors of furnished room existence in New York by ignoring them in summer and by wearing an overcoat and remembering his blessings in winter; now he lived in a top floor corner room of a hotel in the club district convenient to Times Square, the subway, and the Public Library.

He came out of the marble pile and down the many broad steps one December afternoon with a couple of books to read in his room before time to go on duty at six: a feeling came to him that he need not have taken out those books; that he would not read them after all.

When he reached his hotel he knew why. There was a letter for him from Chesterfield Carter which read:

DEAR VICTOR:

You are not anxious to leave New York. I know this, and suggest it only because you already know what my thought has been. You will recall our conversation of last May when you were down. There is unquestionably a need for a first class daily newspaper here to do

something for the city to offset the graft proclivities of the Geiger crowd, and *The Messenger*, which, as a newspaper, is a joke, but which as an organ for Burton, Geiger, Perkins, Mason, and the rest of the street railway and factory people is a real menace. With our growth as a city—we figure 38,000 or 40,000 now—the amount of new activity is great enough so that the people pay little attention to the stranglehold on the public that the interests named are bent on getting. Everybody is for himself. We need more public spirit. Prosperity is with us to a degree which lulls the public mind; we never got in this section the full effect of the chaos which followed the war.

The *Clarmont Daily News* will begin publication January first. With Lane, Clark and Jones I've raised seventy-five thousand capital. We shall issue from brand new offices (Hastings building), fully equipped in a modest way as to presses, linotypes, etc. A. P. morning service, which you say is better than *The Messenger's* day wire and gives us the jump on them every issue. I haven't gone into this, you may be sure, without feeling my way. Johnson, the Washington newspaper man who was here last summer when you were, whom you liked so well, will be News Editor. I can offer you the salary you are getting, to come here as Editorial Writer. We shall give you responsibility enough, but not too much. The intensive training you have had in New York will be of the utmost value to us. Can you afford to give up the big things that probably would be ahead of you in New York? I don't know, frankly, I don't. I have felt

it might be an injustice to ask you to go into merely "provincial" journalism.

The editorial conduct of *The Messenger* rests now upon Kobelgard, a new man imported by Burton from Atlanta to take the place of Hemp, whose Western breeziness offended some of our good citizens. Hemp had to go when he printed the story about Colonel Burnham's dog leading him home from the all-night poker game. Kobelgard looks to be the wise and wily sort.

Politically the *Daily News* will be free, independent and American, and will support the present able and American Administration. I see more and more that Americanism is bigger than any party, and our following will not be small. Virginians are patriots at heart. We can stir them. I foresee a momentous political campaign next fall. The Administration, as you know, has been hampered by a politics-ridden Congress: we shall stand, decently and reasonably, for honesty as opposed to political preferment. For some years I have reserved the right to change my political designation in the interests of my country.

If you would like to join us in a fight for civic betterment in Clarmont, and for broad Americanism as opposed to merely party politics, write me at your early convenience.

As ever I am your friend, with kindest regards from Mrs. Carter,

CHESTERFIELD CARTER.

Victor's reply:

DEAR MR. CARTER:

Yes. And I thank you!

Fate speaks my language, and spreads my table before me with my friends.

I shall relate the story of the Yankee traveler: He found himself in an unknown land, in a strange city. He was hungry, not able to speak or read the language. He desired to dine at the grand hotel, and the menu cards were printed in the foreign language.

Said he, "What shall I do in order that I may dine? Ah, I have it!"

And he went to the great public market. First he bought a neat little box, which he divided into compartments by means of pasteboard; then he went from stall to stall and purchased one each of those edibles which were good in his mind—

One egg.

One sample roast beef.

One sample bread.

One radish.

One bean.

And his other desires, one each.

And he proceeded to the grand hotel: the waiter came, and gave to him the strange menu card.

It was waved aside—the traveler opened his box; placed his finger upon the radish, the bread, the egg, the beef, the bean, thus indicating his desire to the waiter as to his choice of foods.

The waiter smiled, departed, returned bearing all!

In my sample case were I that traveler—you will pardon the restricted space I allot to you my friend—there should be:

One Chesterfield Carter, Esq.

One David Duncan.

One Clarmont.

One Opportunity to live and work amongst my friends.

Lo! It has come to me! Fate knows my desires perfectly!

I shall not write more now. January first will see me on duty with your enterprise. I hope I may be of some help. I know little about the newspaper business. I shall try to know more each day. My heart is with you. We shall succeed. I am glad you are to have Mr. Johnson as News Editor. He is experienced, and capable.

And I am, with a thousand good wishes to you, to Mrs. Carter, and to my foster father the moment you shall see him,

Affectionately your friend,

VICTOR DAUDET.

CHAPTER II

JAMES A. BURTON, a middle westerner well on the way to being a millionaire, had arrived in Clarmont the year Henry Geiger finished at the University. He had come there with money, to make money, having discovered Clarmont through John Geiger's brother Otto, a western wool grower, who had been the recipient of moneys advanced by John.—John, never overlooking his own interests, kept a string on his moneys.

Big woolen interests had become, through powerful congressmen, very much favored by the revised tariff which went into effect after the close of the European war.

Certain Democrats proved to be no less approachable than certain Republicans once were, when the "Interests" had an axe to grind. In short, the high tariff placed upon wool made growers and manufacturers plutocrats. Oh, there was money in it, big money! The tariff was absolutely

prohibitive, and the consumer contributed handsome toll to manufacturer.

James A. Burton was part owner, with John and Otto Geiger, of certain bonanza sheep ranches. Clear-headed, an American man of business, he saw, in Clarmont and John Geiger, a golden opportunity: a woolen mill, and a big one! Location, Clarmont. Geiger and Burton built it, and began to coin money. Messrs. Geiger and Burton became associated in half a dozen schemes: The Clarmont, Albemarle and Augusta Street Railway; The Clarmont Cooperage Factory Corporation; The Clarmont Real Estate Company; The Clarmont Ice Company; The Albemarle Gas and Electric Company; The Dixie Baking Company.

Mr. Burton built a magnificent summer resort hotel three miles beyond Afton, at the highest and most beautiful vantage point in all that Blue Ridge section a dozen miles up from Clarmont; this was his private enterprise, and plaything; but none the less it was an enterprise.

Add that Mr. Burton, with his business friend Mr. Geiger, owned and controlled *The Clarmont Messenger*, and you know the complete story of their foothold and monopoly of Clarmont; a story familiar to Americans and applicable to thousands of towns and cities in America. Geiger and Bur-

ton had Clarmont by the neck, throat, heels and middle!

An interesting personality was that of James A. Burton. You shall see him as Victor Daudet, ten days after January first, saw him in the Clarmont City Club, of which Chesterfield Carter was a founder and charter member; into which, however, Mr. Burton had been voted by business friends.

In this common meeting ground, the Clarmont City Club, the foremost business and professional men of the city met daily. Kobelgard, the wise and wily editor of Burton's paper, saw Victor enter that afternoon with Mr. Carter (who had already proposed him for membership).

Kobelgard touched Burton's arm: "There's Daudet, Carter's associate editor—do you want to meet him and size him?"

Kobelgard found his chance in a moment, when Mr. Carter became engaged in conversation with Baker, a small cooperage factory owner. "Good afternoon, Mr. Daudet."

"Good afternoon." And Victor looked around into Kobelgard's peculiar greenish blue eyes, and noted the small tuft of hair on his pointed chin.

"I say, old fellow, I want you to meet my boss—Burton, you know. We newspaper men have to

know 'em all, without fear or favor—just like one of the Fraternity, Burton. *Really.*”

“Certainly!”

“Ah! Here he is—Mr. Burton, I beg your indulgence for a moment. Let me present my newspaper friend Mr. Daudet—*Daily News*. Writes well—you commented—oh, pleasantly, I assure you, Mr. Daudet—on his leader yesterday!”

Burton had turned with Kobelgard's first words, from the *London Illustrated News* file he was ostensibly consulting, and had looked Victor through with an appraising glance: seemingly courteous, but sharp as the look of the market place. “Glad to know you, sir. Pleased to see you here. Happy to have you in Clarmont. Every thinker is an asset. You think. Allow me to say it. I count myself a friend of the Newspaper Craft.”

“Your welcome is doubly a welcome,” Victor answered. “I am happy to assure myself that it comes from a friend of the Craft.” And Victor looked at Mr. Burton with eyes that met piercing blue eyes set deep in a forehead which was narrow but high. The man's chin was aggressive. Forty-six years of fight had shaped it: his teeth were even and good. He weighed perhaps a hundred and ninety pounds; was fit, red-cheeked, clean shaven, well groomed, successful, typical.

Such a man estimates every man he meets; it is a part of his business. His glance at Victor, and what little he already knew about him revealed to his judgment very accurately that the young man was at least not less keen, probably was quite as resourceful and perhaps was better trained than his man, Kobelgard.

"You're up for membership?" he queried, in a cordial way.

"I have that honor."

"See you often, I trust—ah,—Mr. Carter!" His cordiality was not less even as Chesterfield Carter joined the group. . . .

Kobelgard and Burton presently strolled into the library. No one else chanced to be there.

"What do you——"

"I wish he was on my paper instead of Carter's," said Burton. "You could use another bright man, couldn't you?"

Kobelgard hesitated. Burton's question was uncomplimentary and disconcerting.

"We couldn't get him," he answered, finally. "He's Carter's man through and through. Ask the Geigers."

Which was what Mr. Burton did in half an hour, driving his own car to Geiger's home and interviewing father and son. They gave him a detailed history of Victor Daudet which was so evidently biased by their personal prejudices that

Burton's conviction became certainty: he was a business man, saw clearly, understood motives, was not deceived, regretted that there was upon earth such a person as Victor Daudet, and told the Geigers in plain terms that the new newspaper and Daudet would give the interests of Geiger and Burton trouble. "Trouble with a big T!" concluded Burton.

"Why so?" asked Henry.

"Because he is damn smart!" said Geiger Senior in no amiable tone. "Have another cigar, Mr. Burton."

David Duncan's was a tranquil and beautiful old age. David still kept his print shop. Younger hands and younger eyes were busy in the city that had grown, but still there came to the old printer enough to please him—to pass his hours when he wanted not to be idle. He lived in the cottage he had built for Mildred, and there, with him, Victor had come to live. A rear addition larger than the original cottage had been built that fall, at Mr. Carter's suggestion, and this gave ample room for a good sized apartment for Victor, where he might sleep the early part of the day free from the noise which would have been intolerable in the print shop, so constant was the passing of trains and traffic. A housekeeper for the cottage, a colored cook who was an expert, and

there you have the household of David Duncan and Victor.

David had passed the early part of the afternoon on the veranda in the sunshine; he felt so strong and well that he decided, as the sun went down, to walk to the *News* office, take a peep at Victor at work, and then, at six, walk back home with him.

David found Mr. Carter in close consultation with Victor at the office, where they had gone together from the City Club. David had passed through the reporters' room, and knocked on Victor's door gently: it was Carter who opened it; Victor wore an eye shade, a trick working newspaper men often have, and was studying type-written copy.

He rose quickly: "Glad to see you. Have this chair. Rest while we finish." His tone was cheery and full of welcome. David, tired from his walk, sank into the big chair.

"We must finish, if you don't mind," said Carter, "and then you'll both come home to dine with me tonight!"

He called his residence on the 'phone. "Judith?—Yes—Victor and David to dinner—Yes—at six-thirty—All right." He turned to David with a smile. "Glad you dropped in." The old man smiled—a quiet smile of loving friendship: "I guess we can't refuse."

. . . Carter's head and Victor's were together at the desk for another half hour. From time to time they exchanged a few words relative to the editorial copy they were going over.

At length, David heard Carter remark: "With the changes indicated I approve. Let them have it straight from the shoulder. Their piracy is high handed, and we'll make it clear."

. . . The old man wondered . . . and thought. . . . Through dinner, when Judith Carter as hostess made them all as happy as her gracious presence could make them, still David thought . . . and wondered.

That night, when David lay down to sleep, and Victor was at the *Daily News* office helping get out the next morning's paper, still David thought. He remembered the night Chesterfield Carter brought a waif to him.

CHAPTER III

It would be unfair to present to you so clever and likable a good fellow; so able a man, and so representative a citizen as James A. Burton in a biting, fighting humor—it would be very unfair to present this man in such humor without a word in his behalf: he loved his daughter Charlotte with a devotion which could not have been surpassed. Widowed ten years, he had lavished upon his only child a wealth of affection, and had not only given her every material advantage that a girl could have, but had watched over her upbringing with a fidelity too little common among rich and busy parents. Every detail of her rearing and her education had been personally attended to, or assured. At twenty-one she was graduated from perhaps the most carefully conducted and conservative college for women in the East. Her four years there had been under inspiring influences. Then she had gone abroad for a year with the family of one of her class-

mates; she had now been living in Clarmont a year, and was her father's home-maker and best beloved.

In the breakfast room of their beautiful mountainside home on the outskirts of the city of Clarmont, Charlotte Burton was gazing in wonderment at the grim, the almost savage visage of her father; as he pushed away his grape fruit, crumpled his snowy napkin, gulped his coffee like a miner, and read and reread the leading editorial in that morning's *Daily News*, she followed with her own beautiful eyes every movement. . . .

"Damnation!" he finally remarked: the utterance was as savage as his countenance. "Charlotte, I beg your pardon, I am not accustomed to swear in your presence."

"You never do—you are troubled—can I help?" The girl had a logical, quick-moving mind, and was not given to protestations or superfluities. Her statements and her simultaneous question were characteristic. His face softened as he looked into her clear eyes. The sun was streaming in at the broad window and fell across her hair, the pure gold-brown of which shone here and there with tiny specks of iridescence. Her lissome figure, as she sat in the richly carved chair at table, clad in a white morning dress caught at her whiter throat, was girlish; yet womanly. Its unconscious pose at the moment showed woman-

liness; a bracing to meet whatever was, to endure it calmly, and—to help. Deeper flush crept into her scarlet tinted cheeks. . . . Her full lips parted. . . . No, she would wait for him to speak. . . . There was a sudden new accession of light in her changeful eyes of violet-blue, as she noted with quick, unerring glance that her father's face was relaxing . . . was becoming familiar—was assuming its wonted look of comradeship.

He passed the newspaper to her. "Read that leading editorial and see what you make of it."

She read thoughtfully; read the opening paragraph, read it over again, and then perused the article, which was not more than two-thirds of a column. She looked up with an odd expression on her face:—there was a funny little crinkle in her forehead, and a fascinating curve of her upper lip as she spoke, in a low, musical, intensely interested tone: "It's clever, conclusive and *very* logical. You have to read every word of it; it's written that way."

"Yes, it certainly is!" he said. Good sportsmanship rang in his voice in appreciation of the straight thrust and finished drive of the article. He smiled, grim as the smile was—"Also," he continued, leaning across the table and taking the paper from Charlotte's hand—"also it makes the promoters of the Clarmont, Albemarle and Augusta Electric Railway Company a set of arch

deceivers and robbers of the dear public without saying so at all."

"That's your railway, papa—the one you want to build to your hotel on top of the mountain, isn't it?"

"The finest mountaintop in America!" he said, enthusiasm leaping into his voice with every word—"the spot I picked for the hotel because it crowns the very height that commands the Vale of Shenandoah—the glorious Valley of Virginia that sweeps from the Blue Ridge to the Alleghenies. We'd make the place the most popular resort in all this section of America in less than five years. It's a beauty and a bonanza—and look what's being done to my idea!" He rustled the paper, and slapped it with his free hand.

She looked at him with genuine compassion, and the color mounted high in her face—he set himself to reread the article.

In brief, Victor Daudet's editorial set forth with unimpeachable clarity that the electric railway people were seeking not only a perpetual franchise but were indubitably scheming to bind the City of Clarmont and Albemarle County to help pay for the construction of the road—without a chance of any return except to the pockets of the stockholders. It was as pretty a steal for private graft as any brain ever devised to jam through a legislature. The editorial plucked out

the "joker" in the bill and exposed it to perfection. Mr. Burton's name was not even mentioned, nobody was maligned or attacked; but the conclusion presented was merciless:—left no ground but one—kill the bill or throttle the public. So had the very particular pet hobby of James A. Burton been treated by Carter and Daudet in *The Daily News*.

"That, my dear, is the reward a man sometimes gets for public spirit in this country when a sharp newspaper gets hold of his plans—they make him out a robber!"

"No, no, not if he'd give the public a chance—not if his bill didn't ask too much without giving others a fair reason for supporting it—that's the idea that I got from reading it, papa."

"You don't understand, my dear; you don't understand!"

"I didn't understand until I read what it said——"

"Well if he hasn't made you see it his way with his infernal cleverness!" ejaculated Burton.

"Whose cleverness?"

"Young Daudet!" he exclaimed. "Carter's the shrewdest lawyer in town, and he's picked a bright young fellow from New York to come down here on his newspaper and rip things open from the inside—I knew it. I knew it as soon as I put my eyes on Daudet. He has an eye like an eagle—

his brain works like that——” Burton snapped his fingers sharply—“snap, snap, snap!”

“And *who* is this remarkable young man, papa—you haven’t told me!”

“Oh, Lord!—Ask Henry Geiger, the next time he comes mooning around here to take you out in his car—only don’t go far in the car!”

“No danger,” said Charlotte, evenly; she became silent, with compressed lips.

“This is the beginning, I rather think,” Burton said, casting aside the paper and putting his finger tips together—“merely the beginning. Carter knows our enterprises forward and backward, and he’s out to ‘protect the public’—I’ve heard of that line of stuff before. They’ll present our private affairs to the public gaze and want things done on a ‘profit-sharing’ basis—yes. Yes. Old dope. I thought we’d get away with our bonanza here in Clarмонт. No such luck. *Don’t breathe one word*, not one word, Charlotte, of what I’ve told you. Smile. Say nothing. Make friends.”

. . . She had never seen her father so perturbed, nor anywhere nearly so grim.

“I respect your confidence, Papa. I’m sorry——”

“*Don’t be sorry*. Smile! I shall, though it suits me the least of anything that’s happened since I built the mill with Geiger and came to Clarмонт to live. It doesn’t suit my purpose at

all. It might dish me—I've got to stop it, somehow——”

“‘Dish’ you, Papa? What do you mean?” He looked at her keenly, hesitated; rose, went to the broad window and looked out upon his sunny sweep of lawn, and down at the huddled expanse of city below.

He turned: “Nothing, now. Political reasons. Certain things are on the cards. Our interests need protection. I may be the man. Forget everything I’ve told you, Charlotte, except the one: *Smile!*—I’m going down town. In the course of a few days I may have young Daudet here to dinner. Or I may not.”

She raised her eyebrows . . . her cheeks glowed; her figure, there in the richly carved chair, seemed to take on an aspect of supple, sinuous strength as she straightened back, and her bosom rose and fell, and her dreamy violet eyes changed to clear blue.

“I sha’n’t be home to lunch.” He passed through the door, and a few moments later Charlotte, standing at the window, saw him in his car swinging down the driveway, his chauffeur at the wheel. Burton sat back against the cushions in a stiff, uncompromising attitude.

Charlotte stepped to the table, possessed the paper which had offended her father, pressed the button for the servant, and took from beside her

father's plate the hot house carnation which he had forgotten to place in his buttonhole that morning. It nestled in her hair the next instant. She threw open the door into the beautifully finished hallway,—which was done in a perfect white enamel, and gathering the skirt of her pretty dress sped up the stairs, and went into her own music room, a small, intimate, and dainty apartment from which one might look upon three adjacent hills, and half the city of Clarmont. She stood at the window for several minutes; then drew up a low chair, and read the editorial. "What a lot it doesn't say," was her comment, at length, spoken in a low voice to herself—"it's as clever as it seems to be sound—I wonder . . ."

Whilst Charlotte was wondering, her father, speeding to his office at the Geiger and Burton Woolen Mill, was rapidly outlining a course of action with regard to Victor Daudet's editorial—was planning what he should and should not say if men asked him about it. Most pertinent of all, he tried to think what was the best way to handle Daudet, the clever young writer. He purposed to see him at the City Club that afternoon if possible.

First, the woolen mill, where a couple of hours pressing work awaited him; then the office of *The Messenger*, to consult very especially with Kobelgard about the answer which ought to be made to

the *News*—or ought not to be made. He was uncertain.

Of one thing he was certain: that Daudet must be handled. Handling men was no new thing for James A. Burton. Nor let this in any measure make you feel that Mr. Burton was an unpleasant plotter. He was neither better nor worse than millions of Americans of his type: he was not for America first and America efficient, but for James A. Burton first, and America to contribute to his wealth. He did not know himself as a mean man, or a poor-spirited one, but cordially and sincerely believed that James A. Burton was a citizen all of whose acts were justified. If he admired materialism it was because he knew nothing else. Money was to be amassed; men were to be used; America was a field to be harvested: honor, all honor to him who harvested well: buy, pay, trade. Trade, and let no man nor any means deter you from your right to get the most for your money *in the quickest way*.

Equity? Public weal? National prestige? Altruism? Patriotism? Honor?

What were these to him?

And what was James A. Burton?

The most dangerous type of man in America.

CHAPTER IV

LET not your heart be troubled by the possible incongruity: Henry Geiger had an office in "The Romance" movie theatre building. A very solidly furnished law office, equipped with gilt-lettered, red-backed law tomes, and with Henry. Henry was no loafer of a rich man's son, however. He put in plenty of hard work at the Woolen Mill office, attending to a mass of detail which both eased and pleased his father and did not lessen the regard Mr. Burton entertained for him—which wasn't much. There should have been almost a soul-bond between Mr. Burton and the Geigers. After all, their ideals were not essentially different. They were out together in the grand cause of money-getting. Possession. Might, Power, Force.

Force was the *summum bonum* of the Geiger type. Mr. Burton was one degree less primitive. Money was his angel and ruler. Money means might. So there you are. Mr. Burton cut his

way to glory a little less crudely than the Geiger type of materialist is inclined to do, but his end was the same; he didn't mind spending money like water if you got Results commensurate. A good free fellow was Burton; sometimes Henry Geiger jarred upon him. This morning was one of the times. Henry walked with ponderous tread into Mr. Burton's private office, almost as soon as Mr. Burton had opened his desk and engaged his stenographer's attention, and held forth the editorial page of *The Daily News*.

"Yes, I saw it," said Burton, shortly.

"How do you like him—did I tell you the truth?"

"Like who?"

"That fellow Daudet—he wrote it!"

"It's extremely bright and clever," said Burton in a breezy way which disappointed Henry. He could not understand why Mr. Burton did not get angry after an approved mode when one ought to be angry. Mr. Burton picked up a sheaf of papers, and turned to his stenographer—"See you later, Henry," he remarked with a wave of his hand. Henry retired to his father's office. Father was not in yet, having gone to his doctor's that morning to see about a foot which he was thinking of having treated by electricity. Rich men will get gouty.

Burton was occupied with his stenographer

nearly two hours, and then escaped from the mill when Henry was not looking. To be very frank and sincere, Mr. Burton watched his chance to escape. The next man he purposed to see was not Henry Geiger, but Kobelgard. He found his man at the *Messenger* office; found also that Kobelgard had written a rather seething editorial in answer to *The Daily News*. Burton read the copy, Kobelgard watching him eagerly, and toying with the tuft of hair on his pointed chin as he watched.

"No," said Burton, handing back the typed sheets—"No."

Kobelgard's face fell. "Isn't it good?" A newspaper man ought to have known better than to ask such a question with reference to copy turned back to him, but Kobelgard was piqued.

"Your answer may be an answer to *The Daily News* man; but it's no answer to the public," Burton said keenly; "that is not the way to handle it. Print nothing about it to-day. Print nothing to-morrow. Day after to-morrow run a full column editorial stating the benefits which will accrue to the merchants of Clarmont if all this new territory is opened up by the Clarmont, Albemarle and Augusta: meantime I'll put a private flea in the right ears that our object is to run the road to the top of the mountain, *and back again*—do you get me?"

"Bring trade here, but not give it a chance to go to Staunton?"

"You're right."

"It wouldn't be impossible to finance a company later in Staunton to connect up," said Kobelgard.

"With the idea in mind, of Clarmont solely," rejoined Burton, "frame up a good one. I'll look at it to-morrow."

"Yes, sir."

The owner-proprietor went to his private office and called up a certain city councilman on the 'phone, and cordially invited him to have lunch with him at one—"I'll drive around for you—no trouble—sure—all right."

James A. Burton had a theory, which in his busy life had been pretty well borne out by experience, that every man had his price, if you could get him to name it:—or if you could find out definitely what that price was. When Mr. Burton went to the City Club that afternoon, he noted on the bulletin board that Mr. Victor Daudet was elected to membership. The stage was well set for Burton that day, as it happened. A very fetching piece of statuary which he had bought to beautify the club library had arrived and was being set in place. It was four o'clock, and members were beginning to drop in. He was congratulated in regard to the figure, and nobody said a word

about the *Daily News*. His eye was waiting, however, and he presently saw Chesterfield Carter and Victor come in together. He spoke to them affably: not a sign of chagrin was in bearing or speech; Carter noted at once Burton's ease, and understood perfectly that he was an adept—slick, and never slow: clever and a natural gamester who took what came without batting an eye. Victor noted the same: he had seen the type in its most finished form in New York.

Not too soon, but within a reasonable length of time, Burton congratulated Victor upon his club membership; then, later, neither too much later, nor too soon, he said, lightly, "You gentlemen passed me a nectarine in the *Daily News* this morning. Of course you know the Clarmont, Albemarle and Augusta is a hobby of mine—but I assure you I've not thought of the public except as a beneficiary." He smiled as he spoke; neither too broadly, nor too timidly. His hand rested lightly on Carter's broad shoulder as though that were the most natural place in the world for it to be.

Carter returned in kind. "Not a word, Mr. Burton. No dislike toward yourself, as you know. We see it the other way, as you also know." Burton laughed. "How do you like the figure, Mr. Daudet?" He waved his hand at the statuary.

"It's striking," Victor said.

"I rather fancied it for the club—picked it up in New York—do you miss New York?"

"We're not far," Victor answered; "not far, and not too different. Clarmont has many of its advantages in miniature. This club, for instance. I like it." Mr. Carter had been engaged by a member in conversation, and walked into the outer room with him. "Daudet," said Mr. Burton, with an air of good comradeship—"I want you to know I'm glad to have you with us. It's a way of mine to say what I say without apology, and, I beg you to believe, without offense. Now, while I think of it, let me say that there oughtn't to be any misunderstanding much less any feeling on the score of your very clever exposition of your viewpoint as to the Clarmont and Albemarle proposition. Naturally, I think you are wrong. I judged as soon as I read it that you had underestimated the benefit to the public, and had certainly underestimated the tremendous outlay involved in building the road. You see a man can't afford to invest without return: but where would the world be if nobody had just and proper inducements to invest—eh, Son?"

Victor had followed his sentences closely. Every one uttered, and exactly what it stood for, was in his mind like an impression in wax. More like thin steel was Victor's counter: "If no man would work for you; if no public would support

you, unless you gave them absolute security that after the work was done and the support achieved they should receive say thirty per cent. in excess of the market value for benefits accruing to you as long as you lived—that would be a parallel, as I saw it with the data at hand. I haven't a doubt the terms could be adjusted. I'd like to see the road built, if it's a good thing."

"Daudet, you're all right. Really, we're all working for the same end. I wish to say here and now that I have an interest in good writing, and think I know it—in an amateurish way, of course—when I see it. A chap who writes as you do is a friend of mine unless he's unwilling to be. I have great respect for Mr. Carter, and I wouldn't try to take you away from him; I don't do business in that way, I trust; but if I'd seen you first you'd have had an offer from me. I wish you all success in your chosen field of work. I'm not going to be small enough to make a face at you because we don't work in the same shop. If there's ever anything I can do for you, any data you need, any little courtesy one newspaper office can give a contemporary,—call on. You will please me. It's my theory that good fellows can always get together, and that it's a waste of good gray matter to scheme against if you can work with a man—in a general way, of course, for the big opportunities and big things. And these big opportuni-

ties and big things are right here in Clarmont."

Burton did not make the palpable mistake of smiling. He closed his plea neither too earnestly, nor too lightly.

Victor's figure straightened; he met the other man's eyes keenly; pleasantly; his voice was in no wise lacking in cordiality: "I count it an honor to know your attitude at first hand. Nothing is more gratifying to a newspaper worker than the establishment and the maintenance of fraternal good feeling; no matter how slight the relations may in the nature of things have to be. Let me thank you!"

Carter approached in time to catch the "thank you."

Burton turned to him: "Take care of Mr. Daudet—if you don't, I will." It was spoken with disarming frankness.

"Victor has a way of taking care of himself to an extent that nullifies a friend's services—I've sometimes noticed," said Carter with the necessary affability: very carefully spoken; shaded to a nicety. No exception could possibly have been taken, and Burton took none.

Mr. Burton saw a friend across the room, and excused himself.

"I'm going to take a spin. Want to go in the car with me?" said Carter to Victor.

“Clear my cobwebs before I go to work for the night—yes. Thank you.”

They were going at a pretty clip toward Charlottesville a few minutes later.

Burton thought that he had done very well. He was not unfamiliar with the psychology of making a smooth, wide open suggestion to a man sharply indicative of self-interest to that man. Perhaps Daudet would not be hard to buy.

CHAPTER V

CAVE-MAN methods, chilly weather, and tire trouble.

When Henry Geiger wanted anything he thought the way to take it was to seize it. It was three in the afternoon when Henry saw what he wanted and proceeded to put into execution his brave idea. He was in his car down town and observed Miss Burton emerging from a jewelry store. He swung up at the curb. "Oh, Miss Charlotte!"

"Good afternoon, Mr. Geiger." She spoke with a musical intonation, but flatted slightly on the last word. Her cheeks wore a pretty scarlet, her eyes were azure, her figure in trim blue costume was alluring to the gaze of Henry, who had been scanning figures in ledgers all day. He was thrilled by the difference. "I say, Miss Charlotte, let me take you home! Car's empty!"

"You don't mean that, do you?" she demurely asked.

Henry stepped out, and shook hands with the lady. He wore a topcoat which fitted him snugly; his shoulders were big and his eyes had a certain eagerness in them which Charlotte was not slow to notice. He really would be disappointed if she refused his simple little courtesy. "Yes, you may take me home." He helped her in, and was beside her in a moment. Threading his way dexterously amid a down-town congestion of cars, carriages and trucks Henry presently had his car in a clear street. "I have to run around by Ivy Depot—you don't mind that much ride thrown in, do you?"

"No." The suburb was only a few miles toward Charlottesville, and the day was fine for a ride. Henry broke a speed law when he shot through Ivy.

"You said Ivy," remarked Miss Burton, as the car spun out upon the direct road to Charlottesville.

"But I am taking you to see the University," said Henry affably. "You told me you wanted to see the University. No day could be better."

"My engagement with you for this afternoon was not entered into with that understanding."

Henry might (if he had not been Henry) have detected a very definite irony in Miss Burton's tone. He evaded a car coming toward them at an

easy rate, and increased his own speed over the smooth highway.

"You insist upon taking me to Charlottesville whether I wish to go or not?" queried Miss Burton with marked politeness.

"Sure," said Henry. And he smiled as he looked into her face, which bore no smile.

She settled back against the deep cushion, and drew on a glove very tightly indeed. There was a steely glint in her eyes—or as near a steely glint as could be conceived in eyes like Miss Burton's.

"If," she presently said, in an even but tense tone, "if you insist upon driving me to Charlottesville, I must request you to drive at less than forty-five miles an hour."

Henry looked at the speedometer and laughed in a hearty way, which was too hearty to suit Miss Burton entirely. But she said nothing more. If Henry had not been Henry he might have been impressed with the fact that his companion was reticent, not to say frigid. . . .

He helped her from his car at the University library, finally. "You would wish to see the library—and the Law building—and my fraternity house—and East Lawn——"

The humor of the situation struck Charlotte. She had almost decided to leave Henry and his car, and go home by train; but now thought she would not: "I'll see the library," she said.

"Ah! You will like it. It is a fine library." Henry felt a pleasing sense of proprietorship as he escorted her within.

She allowed him to show her about, and listened patiently to his explanations and comments.

"Now for the Law building—I spent many hours in the Law building when I was at the University!"

"Indeed?—however, I shall ask you to take me home now."

"You are not speaking seriously?"

She looked at him keenly: "Never more so. You may take me home."

Henry detected a certain quality in her voice which enabled him to judge that their ride home would be pleasanter if they started at once.

Incensed as Charlotte had been at his high-handed appropriation of herself, she wished very much to laugh, but refrained; and, as he talked on and on, gave him an occasional answer. They passed from Charlottesville, and were soon speeding in the open country. A flock of sheep was grazing in an adjacent field, which, as it happened, was part of a large tract acquired by John Geiger, who was experimenting as to the feasibility of raising raw wool in Albemarle County.

"Father's sheep," said Henry, pleasantly.

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Did you know my father and your father had a piece written about them in the new paper this morning that was disgraceful?" suddenly asked Henry.

"I saw it."

"You read it?"

"Yes."

"The fellow that wrote it I know. He went to the University when I did. He is—he is a *fool*!"

Charlotte arched her eyebrows. "Really!—I should have thought that a particularly bright mind and clever intellect was responsible for that article."

"Shucks!" said Henry; "he is not."

"Who is not?"

"Victor Daudet."

"Victor Daudet," she repeated; "what an interesting name." Henry was unable to refrain from a minute setting forth of Daudet's disagreeable qualities as manifested from the time he had known him, and Charlotte listened with attention.

"So he was a French orphan boy," she remarked, non-committally.

Henry informed Miss Burton that he did not care for the French and that France had acted disgracefully in the European War.

"France won the esteem of all the World," she said, softly, when he paused in his tirade.

"Shucks!" said Henry explosively.

She gave him the same look from her eyes that the whole blue sky might cast upon a mole emerging to the day.

Henry increased his speed. They took a thank-you-marm with a bump; then a continuous jar shook the car——

Henry came to a quick stop, and got out.

"Tire trouble?" she asked.

"Flat!" said Henry disgustedly.

Charlotte got out,—unassisted, while Henry gazed at the offending tire on the rear wheel. She joined him, as a big car with two in it who had not been observing the dry law of the state of Virginia shot by at wanton speed.

"Fresh!" said Henry; "they might have stopped and given me some help."

"Do you need help?" asked Charlotte; "can't you put on the extra tire?"

"I like to have help when I jack the car."

"Here comes another machine," Charlotte said.

Even before it slowed and stopped, Henry noted that it contained two gentlemen of whom he wished nothing.

Chesterfield Carter and Victor got out. "Tire trouble, Henry?" It was Mr. Carter who spoke; and in a thoroughly pleasant tone.

"Yes." And Henry nodded curtly to him and

then to Victor, whom he had not met since the *Daily News* started.

"Can we fix it?" Carter asked, looking critically at the flat tire—"You have an extra."

"I don't know—it is a job." Henry did not fancy letting them help him; but he was in the open country, nine miles from Clarmont.

Miss Burton joined the group. Mr. Carter never had met her, though he knew quite well who she was.

"Present them, please," said Charlotte, as Victor and Carter walked to the other side of the car.

Henry had no other recourse, and introduced Mr. Carter and Mr. Daudet. She gave her hand cordially to each of them,—which Henry thought she need not have done.

"I'll never get it fixed before dark," Henry said—"no use your helping. I'll leave the car here. We can walk to Ivy and get the train." He turned to Charlotte as he spoke. She said: "That's how far?"

"Oh, a couple of miles."

Victor knew it was nearer four; his eyes were upon Miss Burton: he appreciatively noted her glowing cheeks, the jaunty toque upon her pretty hair, and the costume of blue she wore so well. . . . Their eyes met, and she smiled.

"You're welcome to ride to Ivy with us—I can

as well take you to Clarmont. We were going nowhere in particular," said Mr. Carter.

"Thank you!" said Miss Burton, before Henry could speak. He was nettled. "Well, you go, then. I shall walk back to Charlottesville and get a man from the garage."

"Very well!" she said to Henry; and her eyes danced. . . . She looked at Victor demurely; he caught the humor of the situation, and his face bore an odd look of content.

Mr. Carter turned his car about.

Victor helped Miss Burton into the rear seat, got in beside her, and lifted his hat to Henry. A minute later Henry was alone with his flat tire, and the three in the car were climbing the long slope toward Clarmont as the sun went rapidly down behind Ragged Mountain of the Blue Ridge.

Miss Burton found Victor a not uninteresting companion; they were soon as pleasantly engaged in conversation as though they had met longer ago than a few minutes. There's a sort of girl who responds to a personality, and Miss Burton was that kind.

A girl like that puts a man at his best, and Victor felt the keen thrill of comradeship which answering mood and answering mind elicits from a chap who is alive and awake. The ride was far too short. They went into the outskirts of Clar-

mont as the city lights were beginning to glitter far and near.

"I'll take you home, Miss Burton," Carter said; "it's only a five minutes, and you don't need to bother getting a trolley-car. They're crowded at this hour."

She leaned forward: "Thank you! You've been most kind. I wouldn't have cared to walk to Ivy," she concluded, with a short little laugh.

Victor smiled. It was so friendly a smile that Charlotte said:

"I've been thinking for at least ten minutes, Mr. Daudet, of asking you and Mr. Carter to use your influence in the *Daily News* to help our little project—which I hope will grow to a big one—of getting a new public library for Clarmont. You know we're going to start a building fund. I'm much interested. We need a new library, and we want it handsomely housed. Papa says fifty thousand would be enough. It oughtn't to be difficult to get the money if we can interest people generally and let the men in town understand that it's a public need, ought it?"

"The *News* will be glad to help in any way," said Carter cordially.

"If I can have the details as far as you've gotten," Victor said, "I can easily take it up editorially."

"Splendid!" she said—"There's a meeting of

the committee at four to-morrow afternoon at the old library building—could you be present?”

“With pleasure.”

She gave him her hand; they were at the entrance of the driveway of the Burton home. Victor helped her out.

“Good night,” she cheerily said, her voice ringing with enthusiasm and good will—“and thank you both! I’ll expect to see you to-morrow, Mr. Daudet.”

CHAPTER VI

MR. JAMES A. BURTON stood with his hands behind his back; if one hand had been thrust breast-high and momentarily between his waistcoat and the neat and expensive Prince Albert coat he was wearing you would have said he looked like a statesman; or if one hand had been close to his ear with the index finger gently entered at the aural orifice, you would have declared he was a best-seller author, with perhaps a touch of ear-ache. But both hands were behind his back, as he stood at the open fireplace waiting for Miss Charlotte to come down to dinner. His coat set off his fine figure: he was freshly shaven, rosy cheeked, and his countenance pleasant. Especially pleasant, as Charlotte entered the room, beautifully dressed for dinner. She wore old rose, and looked charming. High color was in her cheeks, and her face was radiant with glow and happiness.

"Papa! How well you look!"

"I return the compliment earnestly," he said.

"You please the eye and gladden the heart—girl, you look like your mother now." The last words were spoken with a serious tenderness. Her eyes deepened. "Papa, no one could help liking you, if they really knew you."

He smiled, and they were seated at table.

"Charlotte, I've had a good day."

"Everything gone well?"

"Excellently."

She waited for him to explain.

"Your father doesn't often let temper run away with judgment. I've been friendly to the very people whose conduct made me so upset this morning."

"That's good."

"I believe it is. I had a satisfactory chat with the *News* editorial chap this afternoon. I don't consider him the most important person in the world by a long shot, but he is in a position at this time, and considering certain matters that are on the cards, to do me a lot of harm if the management of the *News* chooses to go after me; I want that young fellow to be friendly to me, and I've met him more than half way——"

"Where, Papa?"

"Oh, at the City Club. We had a personal chat. He's keen, that Daudet."

"He's keen looking."

Mr. Burton glanced quickly at Charlotte; and most inquiringly.

"I've met him."

"You've *met* him—can't you tell me he's a very particular friend of yours—that you went to school together—or—something?"

Charlotte laughed. "Well, I not only met him, but had an auto ride with him."

Mr. Burton dropped his fork on the thin china, and gazed into his daughter's face with an odd and a puzzled look.

"I had a peculiar auto ride with Henry Geiger, and an unexpected and delightful ending of the episode at the convenience of Mr. Chesterfield Carter and Mr. Victor Daudet, who talked to me for at least a half hour and mentioned a lot of pleasant things in a perfectly happy way!" And she explained in detail.

Mr. Burton listened with interest. "Well," he commented, "that suits me. The fates have it *not* upon the cards that my interests are to be jeopardized by our bright young friend. If he's our friend he won't do it. Business is business, but we can make our path smoother by being on good terms. If we don't sulk, the other fellows won't. No use being enemies, and not the slightest use neglecting a God-given opportunity to make a friend. I know you were pleasant to him! Charlotte, I thank you."

"As for that, it wasn't difficult to be pleasant to Mr. Daudet. He was pleasant himself. Pleasant, and—even more. He's interested in our new public library plan. Mr. Carter and the *News* and Mr. Daudet will give their support to it. I invited Mr. Daudet to be present at our committee meeting to-morrow, and he promised."

"Put him on the committee," ejaculated Burton—"we'll do it!"

Charlotte smiled. "I wonder if we could—he's mighty quick, and discerning—and educated, I'm sure, and——"

"We want him," said Burton; "it's practical to have him."

Father and daughter exchanged a long glance. "You mean," she said, at length, "that you would like to disarm the *News*—to forestall any further attacks on your enterprises by being on the best possible terms with——"

"With—everybody, Daudet included," interrupted Burton. "Charlotte, don't misunderstand me. I'm not the man to kowtow to anyone for the sake of gain; and I can perhaps make clear to everybody else that my interest in the public library is genuine. You can tell them at to-morrow's meeting that my subscription to the new building fund is five thousand dollars. You can go ahead on that basis. Have a building committee and a book committee. You might eventually

put me and Mr. Carter on the building committee; and I rather think Mr. Carter will decline. He's a very busy man. No doubt Mr. Daudet would then serve. He'd be an excellent man—and probably he knows books, too."

Charlotte's face was alight. "Splendid!" she said; "and Papa, will you find out something more about the site, the one nearest the High School building?"

"Geiger owns that land. He'd want six times what it's worth."

"I wonder if Henry is still in Charlottesville," remarked Miss Burton with a faint smile.

"Let us hope so," said Mr. Burton.

Victor always arose from sleep refreshed. After a cold bath, and a hot breakfast at eleven next morning, he went into the brilliant sunshine of the perfect January day, and took a mile walk; then to the office, where he read exchanges and thought out a couple of editorials, one of which he wrote. He was satisfied with it, after a careful editing, and had a consultation with Johnson, the news editor. Johnson was a dyed-in-the-wool newspaper man, and a splendid co-worker. He got the right sort of local news, and trained his reporters to write tersely and attractively. He had a keen sense of the value of wire news; knew national stuff thoroughly, and was beginning to

feature state and suburban copy effectively. Imagine a whimsical smile, a tousled head of tow hair, a fragrant corn-cob pipe, a lightning-like sense of humor and a clear understanding of men's motives and human nature's vagaries, and you see and know Johnson.

Victor mentioned the new public library movement, and told him the *News* was going to help push it. Which Johnson agreed was a mighty good thing. "In this business we let nothing get by except stale news," was his final comment.

Victor found four o'clock a long time coming. Meantime he sat in his office and joyously thought of his lot: both the freedom and the responsibility of his new environment pleased him in his outlook upon life as it had shaped itself for him. Freedom from machine-made tasks stimulated him to do his best. He believed he had a great opportunity, and was ambitious for his future. He wanted to make the *Daily News* some day one of the representative papers of the South. He felt grateful for the friendship of Mr. Carter; he was intensely interested in the civic and national problems which were crowding so fast and would come still more swiftly in a few months. Alive, alert and enthusiastic, he was like a racehorse trained for great effort and a great prize. To Victor the prize was not in the nature of a per-

sonal reward, but an opportunity to do big things and have them count.

He went to the library building at least three-quarters of an hour early that afternoon. Odd, but Miss Burton had done the same thing. To be exact, she was there five minutes before Victor was; and greeted him with a laughing smile; explaining why she laughed in a word or two. "What a fine ride we had home on a tire that wasn't flat!"

They went into the room where the committee meeting was to be held, and she confided her hopes to Victor in regard to a new building, telling him how they proposed to arouse public interest and get funds: and then she told him that her father would give five thousand. Victor congratulated her upon having made so valuable a convert. "Oh, papa is always interested in public matters," she said, with a little light away back in her eyes. . . .

Victor advised her to have groups of interested persons make a systematic canvass of the right sort of people in Clarmont, and suggested a popular subscription movement; the idea being to interest the many, as well as the few larger contributors, and thus to gain quick headway.

"And we want a big public meeting soon, with speakers—wouldn't you speak for us at such a meeting?"

"Yes," Victor said.

"Your editorial support will be appreciated, I can tell you. It's kind of Mr. Carter to be willing."

"I never knew Mr. Carter to be unwilling when a good thing was to be done," said Victor earnestly.

"Would you serve on the building committee?" she asked, with a directness which made Victor sense her keenness.

"If that wouldn't bind me too closely: if it wouldn't commit me. You understand, Miss Burton, a newspaper man always reserves the right to write and to publish what he sees fit on local topics."

She had his answer. And took it perfectly in good part. For she smiled in a friendly way.

"I've written to half a dozen firms of architects about plans," she remarked, with an upward look into his face as she stood beside him; "wouldn't you like to glance at some of the correspondence before we have our big public meeting?"

"It would be a pleasure."

"I shall send the data to your office."

"I shall write an editorial on the project in a day or two."

"Good. Thank you. Here come Mr. Keye and Mrs. Doane."

Victor was introduced to Mr. Keye, who was one of the Episcopalian rectors of the city—a

man whose genuineness was evident in bearing and speech: and to Mrs. Doane, a widow of fifty whose time was given to practical good works.

Others came presently. Victor remained a half hour—long enough to observe that it might develop into a working committee with definite ideas and a business-like way of ignoring non-essentials. Miss Burton, he particularly observed, was given to direct methods, and knew what she wanted. She was quite modest about it, he quickly decided, but easily the most alert and far-seeing.

He made his apologies before they were through, as he was due to meet Mr. Carter at the *News* office. She said good-bye to him, cordially, remarking, "And we may expect you to serve on the building committee, Mr. Daudet?"

"I think so—when the time comes—if I can be of any assistance. I'll let you know in a day or two. Meantime I'll write something."

"Yes. Thank you. Please do."

There was a ringing lilt in her voice pleasant to hear.

CHAPTER VII

MR. CARTER greeted Victor with a smile; and sat down in his editorial writer's sanctum with his usual air of good comradeship. "Well, what of the library idea?"

"They're going at it in the right way. Miss Burton isn't slow."

"Capable girl, from all appearances. We'll lend our efforts to the project gladly. This community is material to a surprising degree, though. You'll have to work, in order to interest more than a few."

"I realize it."

"Victor, we're going to have a wide open, fair, broad policy for the *News*. The Geiger and Burton enterprises aren't to be attacked in a cheap way, or because they control a rival newspaper. There's one especially vulnerable company, however, that we are entitled to tell the public about."

"Which?"

“The Gas and Electric Company. Burton owns about a third of the stock. They are exempt from taxes, and charge forty per cent. more for their product than is charged in any city of our size in the state. Next week, we will present facts. Meantime give the new public library a boost.”

Victor's face brightened, but presently took on a serious look: “I'm ambitious to do whatever I undertake in a dignified and in a fair way,” he said; “perhaps I'm quixotic but I know you sympathize with my desire to maintain a high standard, and to treat everyone well—without viciousness, I mean, no matter what we expose to the public.”

Carter reached forward and took his hand: “My boy, I am in accord with your desires on that score. And it is yours to write as you will. The object of the *News* is to create public spirit and to protect our interests as a community against rapacity. Further, it is my hope to stimulate a genuine Americanism among our readers: and to increase our clientele; and to stand for honor. Americanism is the biggest theme in the United States to-day. There never was greater need to encourage it, to fight for it, to explain it, to present it in all its phases. We are committed to no political party except so far as that party is truly American, National and patriotic. We support the present Administration because it is Ameri-

can. With the mercenary politicians in the Republican party we have no more sympathy than with those of like sort in the Democratic. Respect for all sincere and high-minded Democrats shall be one of our guiding principles. Let every editorial you write upon National topics be written with the confident belief in your mind that as Northern Republicans have been big enough to support Democrats if judgment and honor dictated, so, now, Southern Democrats will prove equally patriotic. Republicans gave the Administration seventy per cent. of the financial support it had, in the conduct of the Great War.

“The lesson which I hope we learned from the pitiless partisanship displayed in the conduct of that War is that every American who loves country above party must support party only as it serves the nation—never as it serves itself. No patriotic American is compelled to be dumb. Autocratic secretiveness and the retention in office of incompetents is more unpatriotic than criticism. The truth, and only the truth, makes a people free and makes them mighty. In a Republic in time of peril it is the affair of the whole people that Efficiency rule. We are not two political parties, we are one great people.

“And now, Victor, the conflict between honor and dollars will be fought out. Either we shall reelect the President and give him a congress that

will work with him for National preparedness and carry out the great plans he has set in motion, or we shall repudiate our obligations to ourselves and the civilized world in favor of the dollar. The vast unassimilated and unthinking population of America never realized, never cared, at the time of our entry into the World War why we entered.

“ ‘The world must be made safe for Democracy’ was an excellent phrase:—but did it explain why, through years of adroit evasion, America compromised with wrong? Isn’t it true that the difference between right and wrong was exactly the same when ‘Peace Without Victory’ was advocated in all seriousness, as it was a little later when we proclaimed our Virtue and decided to fight? Americans need instruction in ethics, and they need common sense. There’s a time coming when we shall need every bit of militant patriotism in this country; every atom of righteous power. Has Germany been sufficiently ‘policed’ to guard against her resurgent power and her ruthless ambition of to-day? Did final peace terms measure up to war aims? Did America incline toward unsafe leniency? Were the American people committed to an error by the assumption that honor or humanity dwelt in the Hun? Did we forget that German racial traits are eternally the same?

“How easily we forgot! Ultra-Idealism isn’t

safe when you're dealing with a wild beast. Justice is not vindictiveness; justice and security for future generations. That sort of integrity called stern might well have been exercised at the peace council. Yet the arrogant assumptions of Germany at the peace table were possible only because the United States had not done more toward the absolute, crushing victory that was demanded for the salvation of the world. Millions of boys lay dead in the fields of France because for three years we had slothfully waited. . . . Never, never again let us be wanting! A nation cannot endure half brave and half coward any more than it can endure half slave and half free. America needs a rising generation of men like the men that made her. Our youth must be taught, or we die. Whoso evades duty courts death.

"The foolish compromise we made with the pro-Germans and Pacifists and Socialists in our own country when politicians got busy after the War has resulted in a Universal Military Training system which is anything but universal, anything but a real safeguard. Americans are a careless, optimistic, reckless people. In our fancied safety, Universal Military Training has become all but discarded. The new danger that is arising is seen only by those who remember the degree of our unpreparedness in 1914, 1915, 1916, and 1917, and who realize what would have been our fate

if Britain and France had not stood between us and the Hun. To-day, the Hun is sharpening his sword again. Unless we get ready to fight, we may *have to fight!*" Carter's face was flushed, and his intense earnestness had aroused Victor's keenest enthusiasm. "I am an American!" he said, "the country which has sheltered and nurtured me is my country. My heart is yours for Americanism!"

"Victor!"

"Yes, sir."

"It is possible that I shall be the Republican nominee for Congress for this district. I have been asked to consider it. Regard the information as confidential." Victor's eyes glowed. "I shall count it the honor of my life to give you all that lies in my power to give if you are named.—My strength—my sacred friendship, and the conviction of my soul!" He grasped Carter's hand fervently as he finished speaking.

The electric lights in the office suddenly went dim; then almost out; then flashed into steady brilliancy.

"Is that an omen?" said Victor.

"Perhaps it is!" Carter answered.

Three little memories crept into Victor's consciousness as he wrote his editorial in behalf of the new public library that night. He remembered

the white dress Charlotte Burton had worn that afternoon; the musical cadences of her voice, and the softly curving lips which were always half-parted when their owner was listening to what he told her. He had told her more than he realized, perhaps:—for a girl like Charlotte, quick to discern and interested to know about a young man extracts no little information in regard to himself.

Charlotte remarked quite frankly to her father that night that she liked Mr. Daudet even better on second meeting than at first; that she thought it a pity that he was connected with a rival paper. And that he seemed altogether fair and broad-minded. To which Mr. Burton, looking keenly into his daughter's eyes, replied: "Charlotte, I may need Daudet before many months have passed. I am willing that you should cultivate his friendship as much as you can in a seemly way——"

She drew herself up proudly—"Papa, of course I want to help you. But you don't expect me to be—forward?"

"You couldn't," he hastily said. "That's neither your nature, nor my wish."

The truth may as well be told:—Miss Burton, lying with her head pillowed on a fair arm, an arm of strength, beauty, exquisite roundness, thought for several long moments of Victor Dau-

det before she slept that night. She wished next week were not so far away, and then her eyelids closed.

Victor was widest awake of any hour in the twenty-four when Miss Burton was fastest asleep. The mail edition went to press at midnight; following this, came a lull—that let down conducive to reverie in an editorial sanctum, if ever such a thing as reverie is possible for the busy, high-tensioned brain of the newspaper worker. At any rate, Victor found himself analyzing Charlotte Burton—and thinking of her mannerisms. She had a way, he noticed that afternoon, of putting her two hands together, pressing the palms tightly, then—presently to bring them together again.

Victor commented, half aloud, “Is it merely a fetching trick, or not? . . . No, I guess that isn’t stage work. . . . The girl seems genuine. I believe she is genuine.”

Mr. Carter, who had remained at the City Club late that night, appeared in Victor’s door—“That was a good editorial on the public library.”

“Glad you like it, Mr. Carter.”

“I saw Burton at the Club, just now. He came from home, I think. I suspect he did so to see what you said about the library. He was reading a first edition.”

“What do you think of his offering five thou-

sand toward the building fund? Johnson ran it front page news-story."

Carter smiled. "Maybe we'll make a killing for Clarmont, if we advertise Mr. Burton's enterprises. Nothing like letting the public grind an axe, if it's legitimate."

Victor laughed. "When ought we to print the story and comment editorially on the Gas and Electric rates—before or after the citizens' meeting next week to stir interest in popular subscriptions for the new library? I've promised to speak briefly on that occasion."

Carter thought. "Better run the Gas and Electric this week Saturday, then," he finally said.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT kindly fate which does not always overlook the desires of young people was considerate. It is possible for a poised young lady like Miss Charlotte Burton to be impatient if time is long and tide too erring. She did not have to wait until the next week's library meeting before she saw Mr. Daudet again. That young man for his health's sake had taken a long afternoon "hike" into the country toward Afton on Thursday, and was returning to Clarmont and nearly there, when Miss Burton, who was driving her electric run-about, espied him as he entered the outskirts of the city. (In the suburbs one notices pedestrians keenly.) She slowed, and stopped, with pretty ease.

"Good afternoon, Miss Burton."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Daudet."

He observed that she not only had stopped, but was not wholly disinclined to conversation; and governed himself accordingly.

"I'll return the compliment, considering the ride you gave me the other day, if you'll get in." Nobody could have resisted an invitation so aptly made—her voice was pleasant, and her manner friendly: not anxious at all; yet particularly friendly. Victor could not have cared for an invitation which either demanded compliance, or suggested that a girl was trading on feminine charm. Friendliness was in his own voice as he said, "Thank you."

"I want to express my appreciation of your editorial in behalf of the library."

"I was glad to do it."

She did not forthwith tell him it was a perfectly gorgeous and superlatively clever editorial. She said, merely, "Do you like editorial work?"

"Yes, I do."

"Why?"

"It makes you think. It keeps you keyed up. Gives you constant interest in life and its affairs."

"I suppose that is true." She deftly guided the machine around a sharp corner, and headed for a hill a little out of the city: "I sometimes go this way to town because the traffic is less. When are you due at your office to-day?"

"At five." She glanced at the little clock in front of her. "Four-thirty. We've ample time."

"Miss Burton, you mustn't be disappointed if the library scheme is a long time in coming to

fruition. I learn that the city council isn't disposed to help at all at present. They want paving, streets, and a new city hall; not a library."

"But you don't consider it time wasted in trying to interest that part of the public which would like a good library?"

"No. That's a start. If we gain headway enough, then public opinion may rise to the occasion. If the city councilmen find it feasible to please constituents, we've won."

"Suppose we go ahead on that basis?"

"All you can. Where is the public meeting next week to be held? I'll announce it in the *News*."

"Mr. Keye suggested the new High School Auditorium,—at eight. Can you come at that hour?"

"I'll arrange."

"Tuesday—you know."

"Yes, I remember."

She switched from library conversation like a rocket that suddenly veers in a night sky, and takes the curve to earth.

"I like my runabout. Does it seem to you to ride smoothly?"

"Perfectly."

. . . *Varium et mutabile semper femina.*

She said: "I went to France, last year." The tone was so candid and friendly that his instant response was:

"A fine trip to have taken. You were interested?"

"Every day of the four months we spent there."

"Battlefields?"

"Yes, all the most famous ones."

"My father fell at Verdun."

"He was a hero. All France is heroic."

Victor made no answer: but it was in his eyes.

She turned another corner, and drove straight-way for the centre of the city. In three or four minutes, they were nearly there—within a stone's throw of his office. "Don't go further," he suggested; "you'll get among trucks and car tracks."

"Very well, I won't. Thank you for taking the ride."

"Thank you!" He lifted his hat, and—the day was done. Not another thing interested Miss Burton so much. Not even her father's remark at dinner that he'd had congratulations from several sources upon his proposed contribution of five thousand for the library.

When Henry Geiger, who was waiting for him at the woolen mill office most expectantly, brandished the Saturday morning's *News* fairly beneath Mr. Burton's nose, that gentleman was much more annoyed by Henry than he appeared to be by the exposé of the piracy of the Clar-

mont Gas and Electric Company. In fact, he promptly declined to become infuriated.

"It's a crime!" Henry angrily declared.

"Which?"

"This, this piece in the paper—Daudet's work!"

"Accurate, isn't it?"

"Accurate?"

"Tells the truth about us."

"My God! And you like it, perhaps?"

"No, but I'm not going crazy about it."

Henry ran his fat fingers through his hair in amazement and disgust.

"See here, Henry," Burton said, "we can't afford to act like a pack of chumps——"

"How so? Which?"

"We'll disarm the *News* from further attacks more readily if we don't show them that we're hurt."

"Well, ain't we—ain't our business hurt?"

"Not much, if we handle the matter properly. We'll cut the rates, and get the public with us. Young man, let me give you a business pointer: concede to the public when you have to, but don't let it look like a concession. Make it look like a bonus." Henry sat on Mr. Burton's desk:—this irritated Burton exceedingly, but he offered no remonstrance, other than to remark, "We have chairs in the office."

"It is all the meddling of that fellow Daudet. I hate him."

"Henry, I've noticed that you do too much hating. Hate never wins. Never."

Which may be counted as final a judgment as could be passed upon Henry Geiger, his type and his methods.

"I'll take up this matter," said Burton—"and I'll settle it to our ultimate advantage. Now I require my desk—Miss Oatley, dictation, please." The trim stenographer cast a side glance at Henry, who departed from the private office.

At four that afternoon Mr. Burton went to the City Club, hoping to meet Victor Daudet there. He was not disappointed. The young man seemed quite at ease the moment Burton addressed him; indeed, Mr. Burton's manner was intended to put him at ease: "You fellows went after Gas and Electric like gentlemen, since you had to do it. Shake hands!"

Victor was not averse.

"Business is business," Burton cheerily remarked—"I don't mind good business. Your editorial wasn't sensational, and not personal—furthermore, it was just about right."

Victor's face was clear—showed no emotion; but his eyes were keen: "Justice is our only object, Mr. Burton." The older man took his arm

in a friendly fashion:—"Come into the library and sit down a moment, won't you?—I want to explain our position."

Victor went with him.

"To show you how right you were in what you printed this morning I have this to say, Mr. Daudet: the Gas and Electric Company contemplates twenty-five per cent. reduction in rates to all consumers, effective at the end of the present quarter. Confidentially, I may add that I had this in mind before your editorial was thought of. Before the *News* began publication, in fact. Am I clear?"

"Quite clear."

For the life of him Burton couldn't tell whether the answer was innocent or enigmatic. Victor's face was non-committal, his manner wholly pleasant.

"Your big opportunity, my boy, if you'll accept my judgment in a friendly way, is to star on bigger stuff than local routine matters. Your editorials on national topics are interesting. You're informed. You write in a manner to win friends. There's a new note in your way of putting things. I hope to see you succeed."

"Thank you, Mr. Burton. It's gratifying to be treated in the particularly friendly way you treat me. It's certainly up to me to say that I'm glad to meet you on the ground of fraternal rather

than antagonistic newspaper relations. I should be wanting if I didn't meet you half way. The longer one is in the newspaper business the better one sees that it's a business—or profession—like any other: co-operation in the common cause of good ethics and clean standards is always possible."

"Well spoken! And my idea exactly. Daudet, I want you to dine with me some week end. I assure you we can forget shop entirely."

Victor answered guardedly: "It's thoughtful of you to ask me. But wouldn't it look to the impartial judgment of anyone who didn't understand, as though your invitation and my acceptance were placing each of us in a position to be criticised, considering that we each have at stake the interests of our rival papers?"

"Nonsense!" Burton declared, in a tone of ringing conviction. "I'm going to have you at my house and make you forget that such a thing as a newspaper exists! For now, rest easy. I'm obliged to you for letting me speak as frankly as I chose. Good day, Mr. Daudet."

And Burton extended his hand in the easiest, most delightful fashion imaginable.

"Good day, Mr. Burton."

That night Victor, dining at Mr. Carter's, thought it fair to tell him of the afternoon's conversation with Burton. Mr. Carter's idea was the

same as his own: Burton didn't want to be hit, by friend or enemy; and judged that a friend was worth forty enemies.

The ways of men are devious. The ways of men like Burton are skilfully ordered. Before he slept that night, Mr. Burton had made two decisions: one, to do exactly as he had indicated to Victor with regard to cutting Gas and Electric rates twenty-five per cent.; the other, to announce within a very few days a reduction of twenty cents a hundred in the product of the Ice Company which he controlled. That wouldn't leave a single vulnerable enterprise for the present, since he had already decided to let his electric railway project rest for perhaps a year. Mr. Burton distinctly could not afford to allow the public to consider him as aught but an entirely fair, and a public-spirited man. He was after bigger game than the exploitation of purely local possibilities. It was necessary to stand well. Necessary and proper.

CHAPTER IX

THE meeting in behalf of a grand new public library for Clarmont, held in the High School Auditorium Tuesday night, proved to be what is known in circles other than strictly library, as a "frost." Only a handful were present besides the prime movers. Mr. Burton, Mr. Keye, the rector; Victor, and the librarian of the makeshift library which now served to whet whatever intellectual appetite there was in the community, spoke to the assembled multitude of sixty. Victor's presentation was clear-cut and admirable, thought Miss Burton. If *only* there could have been a good-sized audience to hear him! Mr. Burton and Victor readily perceived that the meeting meant nothing to Clarmont; that a movement for a library would not be popular.

"The average American town wants movies, dance halls, pleasure parks, a free roof garden and a chance to go to bed late," said Mr. Burton to Victor, when he and Charlotte were chatting

with him for a moment after the meeting.

"Mr. Carnegie means well, but he's an amiable superfluity in most small cities that want to be big. People are too busy building."

"Building by day, and pleasuring by night; they don't want books." Mr. Burton was plainly disappointed. So was Charlotte. It showed in her rather compressed lips, and her eyes, which held none of the misty light so often in them: "I don't propose to give it up without an effort," she said. "We can at least have a meeting of those who care at the old library building every week or so. Will you come to our next, Mr. Daudet?"

"I think so, thank you. When is it?"

"Thursday week—or—no, I might call it for Tuesday, Tuesday afternoon at four—a week from to-day."

"I'll come," he said, with a smile; "though I doubt if I can be of practical assistance."

"Every individual interested is just so much gain," she assured him; "I shall expect you."

"And if you see a way to boost in the *News* I know you will," added Mr. Burton.

"With pleasure."

When Victor returned to his office he solaced himself by writing a speculative editorial in serious vein upon the possible feasibility of the utilization of the electricity in cats' backs for com-

mercial purposes. Probably only the Gallic wit could have conceived and executed in quite so artistic form an idea so whimsical; he gave it a quasi-scientific tone which was delightfully ironic.

The article declared that if, with delicacy and precision, and taking great care to secure the deep affection of the cat before beginning operations, you placed the cat upside down with its back in contact with a fine meshwork of copper wires, and then gently bastinadoed the cat, its back would emit quantities of electricity upon the copper meshwork—and there you were!

No doubt the literal-minded readers of the *News* wondered prodigiously when they perused the article. Reading it aloud next morning to her father, at the breakfast table, Miss Burton's intonations and emphasis made it seem to Mr. Burton the funniest thing he had heard for a long time. They agreed that it was too good to laugh at:—one of those things that make you quietly smile every time you think of it all day; and perhaps the last thing before you sleep at night—as it did Miss Burton.

Promptness is a virtue. Charlotte and Victor were each at the old library a full forty minutes before time for the meeting of the committee on Tuesday. A low-ceilinged room, with books little in evidence, having a broad-topped table about

which persons might gather as though at a meeting of a board of directors; stillness—no street noises; no voices other than their own. The cosiest sort of time and place for a chat.

Charlotte's dress was a white one similar to the dress which struck Victor's fancy on the occasion of his first library meeting, and he thought it set off her beauty even better. She was undeniably a beautiful girl.

A little bit chagrined she seemed to be, because she could not tell Victor of converts to the cause and abundant signs of interest in the new library idea. "There are plenty who could help, and won't," she said, incisively.

"Perhaps," Victor said, "they're constitutionally unable. Some persons are that way. After all, the only two kinds of people in the world are either helpful, or not helpful. You can divide humanity into those two classes. An impression which I never have forgotten was made upon me when I was a boy. Two men whom I knew well lived on opposite sides of the railroad track; for the purpose of illustration, you can reckon, in a general way, that a railroad track runs through every town in the world, and, let us say, the helpful men live on one side and the others just across the steel dividing line.

"The man I knew who was helpful lived his life for others entirely; did not only his duty, but gave

light and sunshine. Goodness, integrity and honor in the greatest and least dealings of his life characterized him. He bore a personal burden that might well have caused a spirit less staunch and noble to faint with weariness. The man on the other side of the track gave his life to self-indulgence; shirked every obligation that life brought him: performed none of the common duties that human beings owe to one another. He died, and not a soul mourned him."

Charlotte's eyes shone. "Who were they? If the question isn't unfair—I asked before I thought."

"*'Nihil nisi bonum de mortuis,'*" Victor said; "so I won't mention his name; his memory is practically out of ken. But the man whose life was worth while—is my foster father, David Duncan."

She breathed softly; her lips were half parted. Then—"I didn't mean to be inquisitive."

"Oh, that's all right," Victor said.

She toyed with a paper knife on the table. "You were a boy here, and then you went to the University of Virginia?"

"Yes."

"How did you like living in New York?" she asked with one of the sudden changes in topic, which frequently characterized her speech.

"I liked it. It was intense in a big, general

way: but you never know people in a friendly, true, sure sense as you do in a place like this. My friends are here."

"David Duncan?"

"And Mr. and Mrs. Carter."

"Oh, yes, of course—Mr. Carter." Her voice trailed away on the last word.

"How do you think we could stimulate an interest in the new library idea?" she suddenly asked. "Some entirely new, unthought of way, perhaps?"

"It isn't the sort of thing you can offer a prize for," he answered—"and you can't make people who aren't thirsty believe it's a privilege to be led to water; much less to drink; least of all to exert themselves to pay for the halter that predicates being anxious to be led to the water which they don't care to drink."

She laughed. "You are as encouraging as a dark night?" The question form was delicately ironic; yet conveyed a sense of comradeship. Her eyes changed, glowed, shone; then were scintillant as very jewels.

"I dare say we ought to congratulate ourselves that even a few are interested—if we can keep up their interest."

"*You* are interested?"

"Oh, yes," he answered.

Which no doubt was true. Yet Victor thought

the whole proposition a forlorn hope when he discerned the attitude of the committee members who presently came in. It was the tamest sort of a meeting. Nobody talked positively, only very regretfully and in regard to the difficulties they encountered.

The meeting was short, and no one seemed to regret that. They dispersed as though each of them might be going to take a trip away, and hoped everybody would have good luck while they were gone.

"What can you do with a set of people like that?" dubiously inquired Miss Burton of Victor, as they left the building together.

He smiled, and shrugged his shoulders lightly. She noticed how square they were—finely trained shoulders.

"Let us meet again, anyway, and see if the members are in better spirits. Do you mind coming?"

"Not at all!" he answered her.

"Then I'll call another meeting for next Tuesday. And thank you. Good-bye. I mustn't keep you longer." She gave him her hand cordially.

CHAPTER X

ON the occasion of the final meeting of the lamented library committee, which was four weeks from the date of the meeting last recorded, Miss Burton remarked with a laugh that further meetings might be considered by a casual critic as slightly farcical. Victor thought there was little use trying to force interest at present. No doubt they did well to acknowledge the fact, since not a soul but themselves was in evidence in the quiet room where the broad-topped table was witness of their sole deliberations.

"I advise you to let the whole matter drop until it is possible to revive it with a determined effort on the part of a committee of at least fifteen or twenty," he said; "you can't do much until Fall, in any case. Springtime here is a time of relaxation for most people. They go out of doors and enjoy the perfect air and sunshine. It's that way to-day. We're going to have an early Spring in the Blue Ridge."

"You are quite right in your conclusion that it is futile to continue. I see it plainly, and sha'n't allow myself to be disappointed." She smiled brightly; then a dreamy look came into her eyes. "For one thing very especially I wish to thank you."

"And that?"

"The pleasure it has been to know you."

He met her eyes with the look in his own she had learned to like,—a look of understanding, and of appreciative thanks.

"My pleasure is as great. Why should I not see you again?"

"Of course," she said, in a tone of candor; of simple sincerity.

"Well," he remarked: it was like him to be definite.

His query deserved a definite answer, which she gave him:

"I'll be glad to have you come to see me at home."

"I question the advisability of that for certain specific reasons which I am sure are valid, yet which perhaps best not be dwelt upon. I ask you to pardon me for not accepting your invitation quite at present. But I want very much to see you again."

"Yes." She spoke the word freely. No equivocation was in its implication, nor in the words

that followed: "I see your position, and respect it. I respect it enough so that I feel I may fairly tell you that if you are willing to go motoring with me, I am willing to have you. I've enjoyed our acquaintance and our conversations; and if, as you say, all the world goes out of doors in Springtime, why not we?"

"I accept your invitation with pleasure. When shall it be?"

"Tuesday, in front of the library," she said, with a little laugh that made her face a ripple of glad looks and good will.

"I shall be here at the same hour next week, then," he said.

"What is your philosophy of life?"

Charlotte made this inquiry with a provocative gleam in her eyes as they motored slowly along a country road and listened to the song of the world, an old, old song that rises clear when Springtime comes and haunts hearts that are young.

"It's like music," Victor said; "it grows upon you. You are conscious that some one, somewhere, is singing—there's a softer, yet more vibrant note than you've noticed before in Life. Not sentimental, necessarily, but—arrestive; 'the arrestive beginning' as an appreciative critic said of O. Henry's stories."

"Yes, that's very apt. The arrestive beginning. And then?"

"Then you come to the 'Stage of the first surprise'—you are interested tremendously to see what this life idea is. Life is a story, you know."

"With the suspense element."

"Of course: that's where the philosophy of life comes in. The suspense element stimulates your faculties of analyzing, planning, and executing. You move; the story moves; life develops; the drama unfolds. You do your little part."

"And that makes you more alive than you ever were before!"

"More alive, and more definitely glad to be alive. You have an objective: you play a part, you enter in; and so, you begin to learn a lot about the intricacy, or the inevitableness, of plot, and you incidentally discern certain truths about yourself and about other people."

"Which counts most? What you learn about others, or about yourself?"

"Depends on which you are most interested in."

"Aren't we nearly always most interested in ourselves?"

"Opens the eternal question," Victor said:—"is it wiser to live for one's self, or does Life yield more if we forget self."

"I hadn't especially thought of that problem."

"Free will comes in, too."

"Human beings do as they must—I'm a fatalist, to a certain degree." And she looked strangely into his eyes.

He caught the look. "A fatalist is always justified, of course: it relieves one from responsibility."

"Responsibility?—Obligations?"

"Yes, obligations; code, duty; discriminating; determining what is right!"

"An intelligent human being knows precious well what is right."

"If they face the question—yes; if Self doesn't constitute an opaque screen."

"Everybody likes to be happy, and to possess everything inviolate that makes for happiness; even Self, I suppose."

"It all depends then, on how fine the Self is; what the Self demands for happiness. High Self couldn't be happy with obligations unfulfilled and code of honor as it conceives honor set at naught."

"Philosophy of Life—we started with music, and end with a moral!"

"Which lasts the longer, music or truth?"

"Minor key?"

—"Brings out the truth more perfectly than the gladsome lilt, doesn't it?"

"Why insist upon too much truth at too great cost?"

"Because every living human being has to face it before Life is done!"

She gazed at him with a new light in her eyes; their strange look was gone; their speculative aspect had passed. A recognition was there. "You're right," she said.

Their conversations often ended with an admission on the part of Charlotte. A girl doesn't have to be convinced, to admit; she has only to like the man.

Certain adages with respect to human life endure for all time because they are true. And none is truer than that Love will find a way. Whether they realized it or not, Charlotte Burton and Victor Daudet were journeying swiftly along the often beautiful, frequently deceiving, but always narrowing path of that friendship between man and woman which leads to the inevitable—to love realized; love understood as love; love confessed.

Charlotte and Victor were as you know them to be: the one an American girl of fine feelings, education, and of native piquancy and freedom. Yet always this freedom was tempered by a gentleness, which appealed to Victor the more every time he saw her. She had seemed to him with each time that they met to be possessed of a very definite spirituality; and this grew upon him. As for Charlotte's conception of Victor, it never took

form, except the one form,—a concrete instance of a man in whom she not only believed but in whom she found a mind that responded instantly to her own thoughts,—and, most particularly, gave her new thoughts. Charlotte did not analyze beyond this; women are little given to analysis: they see, or they do not see: they believe, or they refuse to believe. In the end, they love as deeply as their nature leads them to love, or they have not the remotest idea of loving.

To Charlotte, Victor was more than merely a romantic figure; his type was new, to be sure. But not alone did newness of type appeal to her: it was his quality of thoroughbred. He could not have helped showing it, more than he could have helped being born as he was born. The longer she knew him the more she was attracted by his magnetic sympathy:—a sympathy not expressed in words, for Victor's life, and training and profession all had bred a certain reserve, almost a reticence at times. Yet when he spoke on a topic which engaged his mind and his interest he could be eloquent, she thought. Eloquent in few words.

Nothing could have prevented Charlotte and Victor from being together, for Love willed it. Their weekly motor rides in her runabout seemed far enough apart to them, heaven knows. All through March and half of April they had hon-

ored the fixed Tuesday, and had taken some delightful trips—to Charlottesville, Afton, and the outlying country—first in one direction and then in the other.

In mid-April Mr. Carter was called to Richmond, to be engaged there for two weeks. Before he left he said to Victor, "Use my car all you like. Mrs. Carter goes with me, and the house will be closed. The car needn't stand in the garage. Take Miss Burton to ride as often as she takes you."

And Carter gave Victor a look of such friendliness that the young man thought he must have known his particular wish. He had informed Mr. Carter quite definitely some time ago that he and Miss Burton were good friends, and that they went motoring together.

"Thank you, Mr. Carter."

"And Victor."

"Yes."

"You're free, editorially."

"I won't blunder."

"And Victor."

"Yes, sir."

"You're free in every way. A gentleman's code entitles him to all consideration. To be explicit, if you and Miss Burton are the best friends in the world, I want you to know that I honor her judgment in choosing a friend."

"Your confidence in me is one of the greatest things in my life, Mr. Carter."

Carter grasped his hand firmly. "My hope for your life is that it may be filled with happiness. Victor, I've rarely known you to err in judgment, and never in ethics. Good-bye." And Carter left the office for the depot.

Victor sat at his desk, and began his night's work. He gave due thought to that, but when the hour of rest was come, he thought more searchingly than he ever had thought with regard to Charlotte Burton and himself. Carter's words, kindly and fair, had made him realize something. He was man enough to face the truth. He loved her.

With this realization in his heart, he mailed her a note which said:

DEAR MISS BURTON:

Will you ride with me to Mountain Top to-morrow afternoon if I call for you at two o'clock? I shall have Mr. Carter's car. If you can conveniently do so, please telephone to me at the office between twelve and one.

Sincerely yours,

VICTOR DAUDET.

CHAPTER XI

WHY does the dull satin whiteness of a softly rounded arm seem to shine through the sleeve of a summer dress of white as though the sunshine and sweetness of the world were there?

The magic of Charlotte's beauty was subtle and alluring; as they climbed the smooth slope toward Afton in the powerfully running car the air and the Blue Ridge skies were filled with encompassing charm. She was not elusive in mood, but thoughtful; he found it best to say little, for a while; he could only wonder at her beauty, watch the faint smile that hovered about the corners of her mouth. She seemed happy as he never had seen her. There was a depth of happiness in her silent mood that was not to be mistaken. She was truly glad of his presence, and so keenly came to him the surety of her content that he said, finally, "I've never seen a day so filled with goodness—there's a sensation as though we were voyaging straight up into the blue of the skies, and

would presently find ourselves surrounded by sapphire and turquoise, with the sun rays dancing and gleaming all about us."

"You've said what I felt," she answered; "I've felt it all the way up the mountain. Why did you know?" There was a vibrant note in her voice—a clear call. She looked wonderingly into his face.

"Well, there's a brilliant bar of light that falls across your shoulder; and in that bar of light I see fairies dancing—that doesn't answer your question, but—I've said what I saw—do you ever see the Things Invisible?"

"How poor one must be not seeing the Things Invisible," she answered. Her words evoked in Victor a thought he had never expressed to her before; never had quite felt she would care to hear; now, he was sure she would understand: "Why do mortals so often use strength, will, and all that they have in this little life to gain only the things of this life—nothing Invisible, nothing Beyond, nothing sublime, nothing that might help us here, and start us infinitely higher in the life to be?"

A radiant glow came upon her face as she answered, "Life here? Life beyond? You believe, then? God is real? Life is Eternal?"

"Do you not believe?"

"Yes. But it's always been in a vague way.

Moments like *now* don't often come, do they? And why do we see mortals about us who day after day and year after year never seem to have sensed anything better than their own petty lives? If the Beyond is so superbly true why isn't it given to them to Know?"

"Finite minds," he answered.

"A finite mind that thinks can't be satisfied, though. I read the other day that wonderful flash of supernal wisdom in the words of the greatest of the Atheists—'Life is a barren vale betwixt the peaks of two Eternities. But Hope sees a star.'"

—" 'And listening love hears the rustle of an Angel's wing,' " he concluded.

"Those are beautiful words—those last, which you quoted; but what is your interpretation of them?"

"Something more than an alliteration," he quickly said—"I should say it meant that love listens because it is love, and it listens with faith; and having enduring faith it is imperishable. It hears because there is answering love, alike imperishable."

"That's logical," she said.

What an odd word for a girl to use just in that connection, he thought—yet it was like her—she was the most mystifying combination of the practical and the reasoning sort of person with the ultra-idealistic type that he had ever known.

She crossed and recrossed her feet at the edge of her white skirt.

"Mountain Top is where Papa's hotel is—I suppose you know."

"Yes."

"We're nearly there."

"Almost."

And in five minutes more they were. Leaving the car, they walked a couple of hundred yards up, and stood on the crest of the mountain. "You know this is historic?" he asked.

"Is it?"

"There used to be a tavern almost on the same spot where the hotel stands, at which, according to Colonial history, Washington, Jefferson and Lafayette stopped. They dined there on their way across the Blue Ridge from East to West. It used to be a stage route."

"Fancy!"

"This view is reputed to be one of the finest in America—west, it's the Vale of Shenandoah." She looked afar, and exclaimed:

"Beautiful—beautiful! Never was such green, such blue of skies over all, such walls of sunshine, such glory of light and of color!" They stood gazing for some moments. She turned, finally.

"Looking northeast,—that's the Rockfish Valley; and nearly due east, is Charlottesville!"

She slowly swung around on the heel of her shoe, following his outstretched hand.

"Let us rest in this wonderful spot," she said—"here's a good place!"

The sun was beginning to decline a little. Its rays shone obliquely across her hair, and a thousand colors were in its sheen. Her half-parted lips were as though they framed a sentence—yet she did not speak.

It was his voice which finally broke the silence: "It is your right to know something that it is perhaps not my right to say. But I am so sure that you ought to know that I ask permission to tell you. May I?"

A flood of color stained her cheeks. "Yes."

"In the months we've known one another I've gone on, and on, accepting your friendship without ever considering as I ought how much I owed you for such a friendship—it's been—*Dear.*"

"Why shouldn't it have been—I wanted it. I've criticised myself more severely than you'll ever know for letting you see that I wanted it."

"Capacity for friendship is a gift. Those who possess a genius for friendship can't help it that they call forth depths of feeling beyond. I ought to have known myself better, and trusted myself less. I've come to love you. Do you understand what I mean with all my soul when I say that? Do you know it means a life filled with joy un-

speokable or a life suddenly come to nothing so far as woman's love is, or ever can be concerned in my life? I ask nothing but that you'll say good-bye to me to-day, or give me a hope for a day that I'll give my life to deserve. I'm no one. But I love you!"

His swift words were spoken. His eyes rested upon her in devotion. She looked into their depths, and then away—"Oh, what you say seems strange—why, why need you have said it?"

"Truth!"

"I'm fearful."

"Fearful?"

"To have you love me—I—I've gone on, too. I don't know."

Her eyes met his again, and he saw there the meaning no man reads but once. . . .

Light leaped into his own eyes—such a glow of light that she felt a thrill of exaltation.

"I only know that what you say—makes me happy—I didn't know there was such happiness!"

"Charlotte!"

Quick tears filled her eyes. She placed her hand in his, blindly; and covered her eyes with the hand that was free.

He drew her to him, kissed her; and said. "We're close to God!"

CHAPTER XII

IN love, not less than in other affairs of human life perplexity—perhaps grief—often follows great happiness; or is woven with it so that neither man nor woman can unravel the ruthless pattern.

As though Fate had but been awaiting this moment in their lives, event upon event now followed so swiftly that it is scarce possible to convey the bewildering effect of the rapidly moving developments that concerned those who loved, and those who were bound to them.

Upon her homecoming, that afternoon which had been to Charlotte the beautiful day of her life, her heart filled with a strange joy that wanted all the world to be happy, she found that her father had suddenly left town on a trip with friends through counties adjacent to Albemarle which would keep him away from home for a week at least.

Charlotte's nature was self-reliant, but of all

times in her life when she craved to pour forth her confidence and seek approval from her father there never had been a time so urgent. It was inconceivable to her, in the exaltation of her love, that her father would not understand how inevitable it was. She saw Victor daily: and seeing him, perplexity suddenly began to take form; for a realizing sense of the intensity of his love as well as hers took possession of her, and brought an understanding of the practical side of things. Indeed, it was Victor himself who pointed out that he asked much; that she had given him everything; that life lay before them on a strange basis, since he had done nothing in life yet, and she had always known every advantage. The fire and the romance of his nature, and his passionate desire to bestow upon her a happiness half as great as his own unfolded to her, and was in a measure understood by her.

She was quivering with the repression of days of love, and exalted with the expectation of telling her father something of the joy of her love for Victor and his for her, when Mr. Burton, ten days after he had left Clarmont, finally returned.

He had a confidence for her before she could tell him what had sweetly befallen in her life. Mr. Burton told her he expected to be nominated at the forthcoming democratic primaries as representative for the district to the United States

Congress. He had quietly developed his plans, and so effectively that his success seemed assured. "In this district, Charlotte, nomination should be equivalent to election! Your daddy stands a great chance of being an M.C. next fall! What do you think of that, Daughter!"

She placed her arms about his neck, clung to him, and said, "Oh, Papa!"

Tears ran down her cheek. He held her at arm's length and wonderingly saw: "Why, Charlotte! Does it make you feel so glad as that?"

"I can understand that it is a great ambition—and that—that—oh, Papa!" And she could say no more.

"Well of all the ways of women!" he remarked to himself, when she had asked him to excuse her, and had gone to her room.

Charlotte met Victor that afternoon, having 'phoned him she would be in front of the Mason Block at three with her runabout. His glowing face seemed to her portentous of tragedy, when she considered what she had to say to him. As soon as they were out of the hubbub of the centre of the city, she said, "My dear, dear Victor—Papa has told me that he expects to run for Congress. You'll be one of his enemies and opponents, and work against him on the *News*. What shall we do?"

"I thought so," he remarked, with a coolness which shocked her into wonderment.

"Thought so?" she queried, in a tense voice.

"Newspaper men conjecture certain things in advance, Charlotte—having reasons to conjecture."

"But what of *us*?"

"The position need not be unendurable. It's a matter of business. Inevitable. My relations toward him need not assume personal enmity."

"Oh, you don't know my father!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when Papa's heart is set on something as it is on this he fights body and soul against everyone and everything that stands in his way, if they won't come to his side."

Victor's face grew grave. "In a few days," he remarked, "the Republican primaries are to be held. It is generally assumed in political circles that Mr. Carter will be the Congressional nominee. This is no longer a matter of extreme doubt. But I must ask you to regard it as a confidence. Your father unquestionably knows it, but do not speak of it, please, until he speaks of it to you. Then, I think we ought to tell him the truth in regard to ourselves. You must say that while I am in honor committed to Mr. Carter's cause, the campaign will be conducted on principles, never upon personalities. He will understand, I hope,

that there is no need for us to be bitter enemies. Or enemies at all when once the Summer and Fall are gone and the political battle over."

Her lips were firmly compressed: "I can't tell him!" His eyes widened, and a hurt look for a moment came into them. He laid his firm hand gently upon her arm:

"Charlotte, it was best for me to tell you I loved you. I thought it the part of fairness, not to say of honor to tell you. I did not order my telling of the great love I bore you upon the exigencies of politics."

She looked at him proudly, a light of trust shining wondrously in her eyes. "That's so! I'm glad I have it to think of!"

She drove the car swiftly along and up a smooth slope of road, in silence, thinking deeply. At length she spoke: "Nevertheless, my mind is made up. I don't approve of evasion—of secrecy. You don't, either. But I feel that it is best for us to live through Summer and Fall without saying to anyone what we one day expect to be to one another. Victor, can you do this for me?"

"If your happiness is dependent upon it,—yes."

She kissed him.

"But you understand, my dear, that the obligations of my position are to be met to the letter—politically?"

“Was ever a girl so beset?” she said in a tone of deep regret;—“the man I love my father’s chiefest enemy, almost. The representative of his rival.”

“You wouldn’t have me the poor sort of a man I’d be if I foreswore duty?”

“No!” The quickness of her answer thrilled him. His arm went around her, and the sweet exaltation she had known that day he told her of his love swept through her.

CHAPTER XIII

THE intermediate events between the nomination of Chesterfield Carter by the Republicans of his district and the National political conventions of the two parties in June are of moment in one regard at least: Charlotte and Victor became convinced that they were justified in waiting until Fall before making any sign.

Victor's work lay before him; and hers was to wait patiently; to endure, to hope, to prove staunch to her lover while she carried herself fairly, truly and well as a daughter.

It was early foreseen that the Congressional and the National campaigns were to be fought on broad lines of principle with a demarcation more clearly defined than in the memory of men living.

It is but fair, in the estimate of men's motives to tell the truth. The politics of James A. Burton were of an elastic sort; it was no concern of his what was best for his country, or what guiding

principles of political faith were his belief; he had one belief—James A. Burton, and what obtained for James A. Burton the most money with the least trouble. He could have been a Republican as easily as a Democrat, had times and conditions made such alliance practicable.

The Democratic party named a shrewd Congressman who long had fought for pork, power, and political preferment to run for the Presidency. Whatever the platforms of the rival parties pledged, the great issue before the country was Preparedness. It was no fault of highminded and patriotic Democrats that following the fateful and chaotic years after the close of the European War, that party which had originally invited and had won the support of a majority of American voters on the slogan "He kept us out of War" became committed to so-called Anti-Militarism. Spasmodic attempts to appease those citizens of America who believed in Preparedness had been made; but immense amounts of money were spent without appreciable result. Politics, and lack of forceful, farseeing business methods ruled.

Dollar Americans had found "Universal Military Training" inconvenient; it had interfered with business. Moral flabbiness could endure neither training nor sacrifice. There were evasions everywhere and in almost every particular. Young men did not want to serve, and hosts of

American women did not want their boys to be soldiers.

It was therefore the strongest political move that the other party could make against the Republicans to go before America, as America seemed to be constituted, on a platform of "Anti-Militarism."

The almost immediate result was a sweeping aside of old party lines. These were consigned, as Victor aptly quoted in the phrase of a great American and a great Democrat, to "Innocuous Desuetude." In the same editorial Victor suggested that the proper designation of the two parties would be, "The Dollar Party" and "The Preparedness Party."

Democrats who were patriots speedily allied themselves with the Preparedness party; and a host of weak-kneed, smug, dollar-worshipping Republicans found their place in the Dollar party.

You know the men and the manner of men in this country. And you know James A. Burton. His type is everywhere in evidence. In great cities, and small; in East, in West, in North, in South; in metropolis, in hamlet, in the free spaces of the open country. Men there are to whom present comfort and the dollar in hand is all. Other men there are—and other women—whose souls thrill with the spirit that made America—the spirit of sacrifice, honor, and a love of coun-

try that makes that country worth defending.

In his first broadside leading editorial Victor stated his proposition by quoting the words of Washington: "There is a rank due to the United States among nations which will be withheld, if not absolutely lost, *by the reputation of weakness*. If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it. If we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."

Meeting Mr. Burton at the Clarmont City Club the afternoon of the day this editorial appeared in the *News*, Victor was greeted—most cordially greeted—by the candidate for Congress.

"My boy, I can congratulate you upon the fire and vigor of your words, but why must you conjure dangers that do not exist? Why, in a word, would you reduce the United States to the status of an armed camp when we're quite able to do business as usual—if we don't go crazy?"

Victor smiled—gravely, however. There was a gleam in his eye, as he answered, "I believe."

"Believe what?"

"Believe what I write—the destiny of the United States of America, of this nation of a hundred and fifteen millions of people, will never be fulfilled if we remain forever helpless against

the greed of powerful nations. We owe it to the world, as a pacific community, to concentrate sufficient military strength to enforce peace upon our own shores!"

"Peace on our own shores! Exactly, my boy! And if we want it, we'll sidestep the nefarious effects of Universal Military Training as a War breeder by not having it."

"Nothing can so surely make for National unity and National consciousness, which alone is our bulwark in time of peril, as Universal Military Training!" Victor's eyes flashed, as he finished.

Burton linked arms with him. "Mr. Daudet, to get down to brass tacks, and be practical, reasonable men—if I were to say to you that I thought you could be worth to me by exactly double your present salary than you are to the *News* would you not, as a sane business proposition consider such an offer from me? Mr. Carter is an employer, and I am an employer. So long as you are in his service you belong to him. But you are as entitled to enter my service as you are to breathe."

Victor looked at the man. Looked him through and through; kept back the anger that rose within him like fire; answered, in a tone as matter-of-fact as he could summon:

"I am not for sale."

Burton winced, a little; only a little. He had

had experience of many men. Some of them acted like this—for a while.

He said, shortly:

“No offense; I won’t press for any other answer than your present refusal. I won’t renew my offer until I am satisfied that your reasoning processes rather than your sentiment of the moment have had time to act.”

Again Victor controlled himself: “I’d rather you didn’t ever renew the offer, sir.”

Burton assumed an air of easy cordiality: “I’m older than you are, my boy. I see farther, perhaps. I won’t press, until *you* begin to see. You must realize that I think something of you to have spoken as intimately to you as I have: I don’t need to ask you to respect it as a confidence.”

“I should prefer to regard it as a confidence,” Victor evenly said.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE constantly increasing tensivity of the Summer proved a test upon the faith, the moral courage, the endurance and the character of Charlotte Burton. She bore herself with dignity, with discernment, and with clear honor. During all of July, and half of August, she lived at her father's hotel at Mountain Top, where the air was cooler than down the slope where the city of Clarmont lay. Twice each week, and no more, she motored to town early in the afternoon, met Victor, and they went for as long a ride as his hours would permit.

She one day told her father, with distinctness and freeness, that she and Victor were the best of friends, as they had been for some time, and that she hoped he saw no reason why their comradeship ought to cease because of newspaper rivalry and politics. Mr. Burton, who had shrewdly followed the course of his daughter's friendship with Victor, and had tacitly approved,

believed there could be no objection to its continuance—"unless," he said, "Mr. Daudet should attack my candidacy for Congress so hard that you wouldn't want him to be your friend." And he glanced at her sharply. Her face scarcely changed expression. "Whatever he does, as an editorial writer, I believe will be fair professionally, and devoid of animosity. I have a high regard, Papa, for Mr. Daudet's sense of honor and of justice."

"Daughter, whatever you do, do not, because Daudet is a well set up, attractive young fellow, fall in love. I've known such things to happen. At least I've known mighty nice, and pretty level-headed girls to have a fearful case of imagination, on the love question. Keep to fact basis. I guess you won't soar."

And he smiled, watching her narrowly, and awaiting her answer.

She said, with a slight flush which was but natural, "I have never known what it was to endanger my father's interests wittingly. I should conceive it unworthy either to mix politics with friendship, or friendship with politics." He laughed, climbed into his car for town, and sped down the slope from Mountain Top, driving much less carefully than he ever allowed his chauffeur to drive. James A. Burton had an abiding and implicit faith in himself.

That afternoon Charlotte motored to town in the heat, and met Victor. He was grateful that she had come, but seemed more than usually silent as they rode out into the open country.

"You're tired?" she softly asked.

"Heat. It's not so easy to write, and to think ahead, in hot weather."

She leaned over and kissed him: "I love you."

"I'm a King, then!"

She pressed his cheek with her open hand, for a moment; then rested it on his forehead.

"That helps the tiredness."

"Rather I didn't talk to you?" she asked.

"No."

Yet she was silent for some minutes. Finally,—
"Victor!"

"Yes, dear."

"Is it because you love me that you haven't written much about papa—about his running for Congress?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Mr. Carter has wished to confine the utterances of the *News* to the big National issues, for the present."

—"The present! What does that mean?"

He looked at her keenly, and with a great love in his face.

"That we sha'n't take issue with your father's

candidacy for Congress very especially unless it appears to us that the alignment of voters on the great National question of Preparedness won't be sufficient to carry Mr. Carter to victory. We expect to win."

"Oh!"

There was infinite regret in her voice. She became silent again.

At length he spoke. "You read my editorials?"

"Always."

"I may have to take an extreme position later. I ought to tell you. I may write in favor of Mr. Carter's candidacy as strongly as I can."

"I don't want to think of it. Why are you so—so set, so direct and—well, almost vehement when you write about Preparedness?"

"Because it's one of the greatest issues, at exactly this time in the history of the United States, that could possibly be conceived. The American people face two alternatives—Patriotism and Preparedness, or Slothful Neglect of their righteous obligations to themselves and the civilized world!"

"That's all very well in a theoretical way—but why, for instance, should you leave me, perhaps for a year out of the happiest time of our lives and be bound for a year to learn the 'art of war.' What's that to us?"

He gazed at her fixedly—"You'll understand—you'll understand later, Charlotte. It means

honor and manhood. Don't you want your country to be ready to fight such greed and aggression for instance as Germany showed when she tried to ride roughshod over France?"

"Oh, that was heroic, on the part of France, of course!"

"Suppose," he pointedly said,—"Suppose the mothers and daughters, the wives and sweethearts of France in those years before she was attacked, had said to their men, 'Oh, we don't want you to *do anything*. We don't want you to be just soldiers. It isn't necessary to get ready, because we'll hope it won't happen. And we want your time and your money all for our own.' That's the attitude that half—maybe more than half—of the women of America have assumed since they found that Universal Military Training involves a little sacrifice."

"We're a selfish lot, aren't we?"

"*You're* not—you wouldn't be. You won't be, as you think of it. You'll see that Patriotism ought to mean more than the waving of flags and the playing of national airs. Flags are sacred only as they represent nobleness, sacrifice, honor, and the might of honor." His face was flushed, and his voice intense. His exaltation moved her.

"Oh, Victor—you're right. I can't but feel you're right!"

"I expect," he said, "to serve one year in train-

ing as a class B soldier, if the bill proposed by the President for the service of all men between twenty-four and thirty goes through—which it will if he's reelected."

She drew a deep breath. "Why should America ever fight again, though?"

"Why is it the history of every nation as of every individual that some time a supreme effort has to be made to maintain honor against evil?"

"Ethics!"

"Truth!"

She guided the car to the side of the road. "Let us get out and rest for a little. Don't let us spend our afternoon altogether as soldiers and sacrificers! I want your arms around me!"

In their ecstasy as they rested in the cooling shade, it seemed to them that love filled the blue arch of the sky and was everywhere. As the sun began to decline, and the soft, incense-laden breezes of Summer grew sweeter and stronger, his veins were filled with an ardent life that made pulses beat with a steady flow of hope, ambition, trust, nobility; and all Charlotte's love was called forth by his own; her faith was renewed—the faith that such happiness could know no long or lasting unhappiness.

. . . When they parted at the end of that beautiful day, she left him with a song in her heart.

Surely, love like theirs could not be denied!

CHAPTER XV

MR. BURTON went on a ten-days' trip West before the end of August, and Charlotte accompanied him. The Congressional nominee wished to get in as fit form as possible before taking the stump in behalf of his candidacy. Charlotte, he thought, needed the bracing Western mountain air. Her cheeks had lost a little of their color through the trying Virginia summer, and she seemed dreamy and sometimes languid, which was not like her. Father and daughter had a glorious trip. They enjoyed the best hotel in Chicago en route for a couple of days going and coming, and rode horseback and "roughed it"—in millionaire fashion, of course—the rest of the time. Mr. Burton took Charlotte into his confidence more than he had done for some months. His mind was filled with politics, and he expounded vehemently his view upon the "crazy idea of filling the country with guns and soldiers and letting business go to the devil." He was not

usually given to vehemence, and his manner surprised her. In the section where they spent most of their time the greater part of both the men and the women voters—of whom there were now millions more in the United States than ever before—seemed to be opposed to giving their support to the Preparedness party. The West was already filled with orators denouncing “Militarism.” The pocketbook was all-glorious.

Charlotte was not permitted by her father to see the idea in its baldness, perhaps; but he dwelt so unceasingly on the “practical,” and the “common-sense,” and the “sane” side of the question, as it appeared to him, that she felt half guilty of treason when she received a long letter from Victor which he had written with glowing ardor and in which he stated his belief that the result of the present campaign would show the world whether America was a nation or a band of traders fit only to hide behind a heap of dollars and run like sheep if danger threatened.

“ . . . And so you see, my dear, they would lose their precious dollars after all!” said his letter. It was plain that everybody was going to be highly wrought up before the campaign was over.

She was glad when the trip was ended; glad to return, and to see Victor. He was plunged into

work nine-tenths of his waking hours, now, but their two afternoons a week together were truly like green fields and pleasant pastures, to his highly strung, ardent nature and his severely taxed mind.

Victor was happier to see her than he had ever dared to own. In all his life no one person had so entered the chambers of his heart. His love had grown with every hour she had been gone. He told her so, and the glad light that shone in her eyes told her own story.

Mr. Burton took the stump on September eleventh, and on the twelfth Mr. Carter started on the first of a series of trips through the district, going over nearly the same ground. Burton was beginning to spend money right and left; for he had perceived the momentum which the rival party was gaining among voters whom he had counted "safe." The persistent, incisive, logical tactics of Carter's editorial management, and the fast-increasing circulation of his paper had started an awakening. Truth to tell, Burton was dissatisfied more than he had been at any time with his man Kobelgard. His writing was too obviously tricky. Mr. Burton made his first speech in Harrisonburg, and set forth the folly of "Militarism" in his best manner. The speech was fully reported in the next morning's *News*, and was ripped to pieces editorially. Not only was it torn

asunder, but its weakness was exhibited and impaled—mercilessly. Its sophistries were flung to the winds, and its inconsistencies, short-sightedness, selfishness and insincerity were illuminated. Burton saw the article before it was many hours old; swore softly, and tried an entirely different line of reasoning in his speech the next night. And the morning after that, his speech and that delivered by Mr. Carter were printed side by side in the *News*. And two editorial articles appeared—one commenting briefly upon Carter's admirably logical speech, and the other explaining everything in Burton's speech which he had left unexplained. Victor's explanation was keen and cutting.

This was only the beginning. The *News* "went after" every word uttered by Burton. When he returned to Clarmont he was not in good humor, and took no pains to conceal from Charlotte that he was not. At their first breakfast together he indulged in a tirade against Carter. He said little about Victor, just then. His spleen was against his political adversary. Charlotte prayed for the time to fly, that the election might pass, and the bitterness with it. In October Burton started on another speech-making tour; his agents were spending still more money for him. He had thought nomination equivalent to election, but he thought so no longer.

With all his force, and all his cleverness, he launched forth in his new addresses throughout the district. If his earlier speeches had been hit hard, his present ones were crucified! With disgust and rancor he read the skilful and direct attacks which exposed his every motive as poor, and made his reasoning sheer folly.

Returning home at the end of hard campaigning, tired, excited, and with ill-concealed anger, he poured forth to his daughter enough of his feeling so that she was hurt unspeakably. The climax came their second breakfast together, when Mr. Burton read an editorial in the *News* which turned against his candidacy words out of his own mouth which had not before been commented upon.

His face was dark, as he passed the paper across the table. "Read it!" he said, sharply.

She did so, and paled. The logic of the brief editorial struck unsparingly home. And Charlotte knew it.

She passed the paper back to him, without comment.

"Your friend Daudet is getting to be a damned fool!" he said.

Her face crimsoned: "That—that's a little hard to say, isn't it, Papa?—I suppose he's only doing his duty."

"By God!" he exclaimed, more irately than she,

had heard him speak in her life, "if I consulted my personal wish in regard to Daudet I should p his face——"

"*Papa!*" The cry which sprang from her lips made him look at her in consternation: her face was drawn, her eyes were pitiful and angry. His mind grasped at something acutely—"What's Daudet to you?"

"*Everything!*" she cried.

"Charlotte!" His own face went ashen white.

"I love him."

He bit his lips, and fumbled at his throat—"How long?" he demanded.

"Months!" she said.

Silence lay between them.

James A. Burton thought. Thought more rapidly, more keenly than he had ever thought in his life with respect to his daughter Charlotte. And he accurately estimated what it was best to do.

He spoke,—hoarsely; but more calmly: "I can't say that it would have particularly irked me, Charlotte, if Daudet had fallen in love with you—but that you should have fallen in love with him chagrins me—I confess it."

"I love him," she repeated.

"Can nothing induce you to give up this folly?—Daudet is nobody." He was going as carefully as he could with her: this question was gently asked.

"I've kept the truth from you through no motive of deception. It's been the same with him. We thought it better to wait until the bitterness of Campaign was past and forgotten. I didn't know it would be like this." She was looking into his face with eyes that besought him; yet might easily have defied him. Again he bit his lips. "Charlotte, I can't say I'm pleased. I'm astounded. I am displeased. But I wish you fair. Do you believe that you want to *marry* Daudet?"

"Yes." The simple word from his daughter was more eloquent to Burton than a thousand protestations of love would have been.

. . . "I'm going to see Daudet," he said, rising from the table; "and talk it over with him; *fairly*," he added.

"If that is your wish, I have only one request to make, and I do make that, Papa."

"What is it?"

"Tell him why I told you."

"Yes—I'll do that. It's only right, under the circumstances."

She had risen from the table; he went to her and placed his arms about her. Nothing could have moved her so much. The silent tears coursed down her cheeks, as he kissed her, and, without another word, left her.

As he rode down town in the crisp fall air, the

brain of James A. Burton did not wholly clear. He had met emergencies all his life in one way—with money. Here was a case——?

Mr. Burton went direct to the *Messenger* office, shut himself up in his private office, and thought. At the end of an hour, he called the residence 'phone of Victor Daudet, and had him on the wire a couple of minutes after. “—Yes, I can assure you that it's necessary. It's urgent. And personal. No discourtesy to yourself, or to Mr. Carter. But I ask you to come to the *Messenger* office to see me as soon as you can.”

When Victor entered Mr. Burton's private office twenty minutes later he was greeted in a way that he did not understand at once. Burton's manner to him had always been that of hail-fellow-well-met. Now he requested him to be seated at his desk; drew out the leaf top of the first drawer so that it was between them; rested his elbow upon it, and looked searchingly into Victor's face.

“Mr. Daudet, I'm a man of business. But I realize there is such a thing in the world as love. I don't class you as a fortune hunter. I ought to preface my remarks to you fairly, since the remarks are going to be extremely direct.” The man's voice was impressive; the more so because he spoke very quietly.

“Now,” he went on, “I am going to ask you what you propose to do if you marry my daughter

and she hasn't a cent in the world. I surprised her into saying to me this morning that you and she have formed a serious attachment for one another. Allow me to say that it is serious, in every sense. Are you sure you want to marry my daughter?"

"Perfectly." Victor's voice was more tense, perhaps, but as even as the other man's.

"And you can take care of her without a cent?"

"I shall take care of her,—yes."

"I'm glad you think so." Burton looked at him for a full minute.

Victor returned the gaze; not defiantly, but steadily, and earnestly.

"Victor," said Burton in an altered tone, "I've thought much of you, and of your ability. You've handled political matters as you were bid, and there's no offense. But now, you belong by every right and every reason to my interests. For those interests are identically those of my daughter whom you love. I have a great respect for my daughter's good sense, and I don't expect to have any less for yours. I have decided to give you a half ownership in the *Messenger* and the editorship of the paper. When can you come to me?"

"Not at all." Victor's mind had run ahead of Burton's words. His answer was instantaneous.

Burton looked at him,—in amazement, rather than in anger.

"I owe you this much explanation," Victor said, "I should regard myself as so disloyal to the great friend I've had from my boyhood, who has endeared himself to me forever, if I were to desert him at this time, that I could not consider myself an honorable and a fit man to ask any woman whose standard of character was decent to marry me. I regret the necessity of so bald a statement, but it is the truth."

"That," said Burton, folding his hands carefully together, "is your present, momentary, sentimental view. If you think I am mistaken, I commend you to Mr. Carter himself. Could I give greater earnest of my belief in the justice of what I propose—for your good, your happiness, your advancement, your prosperity, security, and the making of you? Ask Mr. Carter."

"Mr. Burton, we are as far apart as the poles. I'd be a weakling to ask Mr. Carter to decide a question which affects my honor. I'd be a poor kind of man to marry a girl because an editorship or an ownership of a newspaper went with her hand. Your daughter accepted my love without reservation, with the full knowledge through all these months that I am committed by every principle of loyalty and by every atom of my belief to work, and write, not only for my employer but for my own soul. If I were to sell my principles, my love wouldn't be worthy of a street

woman. No matter though you have fixed the price, it isn't a matter of price, to her nor to me."

"Price?" queried Burton, in a dangerous tone.

"You have my view in the only way I can possibly interpret your proposal. I respect your solicitude for your daughter; without meaning disrespect to yourself, but, rather, in extenuation of what seems to me is your ethical error, I must say that I believe you have not thought of the principle involved and the sacrifice of honor on my part."

"Young man," said Burton, "you will find, if you live, that life can't be ordered on a basis of sentimentality. I'm sorry, very sorry, that, keen as you are in many ways, I must consider you too weak and ill-balanced a man to marry my daughter. If your answer is final, you have my answer. I shall strive to show her that you are not for her, and that most assuredly she is not for you."

"Very well, sir."

"Let us terminate this interview, Mr. Daudet."

Victor rose quickly: "I wish you good day, sir."

CHAPTER XVI

I think you have done me an injustice.

Sorrowfully yours,

CHARLOTTE.

This was the note Victor received at the end of two days' waiting. He replied:

I believe I should have done you a great injustice if I had not acted as I did. Perhaps you do not understand. When and where may I see you?

I am yours,

VICTOR.

For one week he heard nothing. His perplexity deepened hourly. But for the demands of his work, his brain would have tired itself out thinking, wondering, hoping, fearing, dwelling upon the same thing. It took no little faith, and not a little strength of mind to wait.

At last a message came to him, by 'phone. It

was her voice on the wire. "Can you come to see me here—yes, at home—for a little while to-night?"

"Yes," he answered.

He stepped from his office into Mr. Carter's private office. It was a little after eight, as he looked at his watch, and addressed Mr. Carter—"Are you willing that I should leave for an hour?—proof's read, and all copy up!"

"Certainly. Take my car, if you like. Come back when you feel rested. You've been driving yourself too hard, Victor. Relax, and drive the car instead of yourself. I'll be here until twelve, probably." Carter looked at Victor's face; rose, put his hand upon his shoulder, and smiled—the free-hearted smile of old.

In ten minutes Victor was at the residence of Miss Burton. A brilliant October moon flooded the broad lawn, and crept in among the white pillars of the portico. Charlotte was waiting for him.

"Oh, Victor!" she had come swiftly to his car—was by his side as soon as he was out. "Please come in!"

"Charlotte?"

"Yes?" she breathlessly asked.

"You want me to come into the house?"

"Just that!"

She led the way; gave him a swift embrace and

kissed him, as they passed through the broad hall. She threw open the door of the library-drawingroom, a small apartment, but furnished wonderfully. The thick rug on the floor deadened the sound of even their footsteps: she turned, and faced him, breathing quickly. She was in evening dress: the whiteness of her softly rounded arms was striking beneath the overhead lights. The scarlet of her cheeks seemed to have an ethereal tinge. Never had he seen her so beautiful. Her fair bosom rose and fell . . . her lips came to his. . . .

“Victor!”

She threw herself upon a divan, as she spoke.

He drew a chair close, and faced her: “Charlotte,—the parting of the ways—I suppose it was inevitable; it appears to have been!”

“No!”

“No!—what do you mean?”

“I mean,” she said, the deep blue of her eyes growing deeper and clearer as she spoke—“I mean that when papa told me what he had offered to you, and that you refused, I could hardly credit my senses—much less yours!”

“Just what did your father tell you—if I may ask?”

“That he had placed no bar between ourselves and our happiness—our love—and that he offered you advancement, security, fitting position, every-

thing—and you refused because of your strange idea that it would be, in some way which I cannot understand at all—not *honorable*. Is it honorable to have considered me as *nothing*?" The emphasis on her last word cut him. Her eyes were downcast; as she raised them the next instant they were filled with tears.

"Charlotte, everything that the noblest woman in the world could be to me you are; and you are that woman. I love you too deeply to *trade* for you!"

"Do you believe poverty to be a desirable lot for the woman you love?"

—"Better than poverty of honor."

"Your ideas are beyond me, then. I have lived, even through this week of despair, secure in the belief that you wanted the love I gave. *Tell* me, and make me understand, if such understanding can relate to mortal lives, what conception of sacrifice you have. Haven't I sacrificed enough?" Her voice was like a song in its sweet cadences, appealing and sweet as he never had heard it. She put forth her hands to him. "*Am I not fair?*" Her white arms were pure as snow—and living fire was in her lips . . . he kissed them passionately, and rose to his feet the next moment, his eyes flashing as he spoke: "I thought you would rather have me as I was, and as I *am*, true to myself, and therefore true to you, than to have had

me yield to expediency and barter my manhood for a Price!"

"*Price?*" she queried.

"Didn't it amount to that? He asked me to sell my allegiance and my principles in return for—you."

"He asked you to give him the allegiance you rightly owed because our interests had become one—must be one, because of our love!"

She had risen to her feet, and, swaying slightly as she stood, again reached forth her hands to his. He took them in his own.

"Charlotte, I'll wait for you, work for you, live for you, and love you; but I'll offer you myself as a man, not as a leech!"

"What can you *mean?*" she cried.

"Should I fatten on lucre, or keep my soul?"

Her eyes softened; for a moment he had thought she was irretrievably lost to him. . . .

. . . Her voice was changed, as she gently said, "Victor, take me to Mountain Top in the moonlight—have you time? Will you give me the time, this night in our lives?"

"Yes."

She stepped swiftly from the room, and came back in a moment with a long wrap which covered her dress, and her arms.

"I'm ready!"

They went to the car, and soon were fleeting

steadily through the moonlit night up, up from the city . . . up toward the skies and the stars, it seemed. She nestled close, and once leaned over and kissed him . . . but was silent all the way. . . .

As though both had the thought in mind, he drove on by the brightly lighted hotel, and they left the car and walked hand-in-hand to the place they had known their day of love and confession.

He took her in his arms for only a moment, then rested at her feet.

It was she who spoke first. "It was Papa's suggestion that I should see you to-night, Victor. You see he was very kind. His heart was kind to me—to us. There still is time."

"Time?"

"For judgment, for final judgment and decision. Time for you to realize that if you love me, you are mine. You must be mine as truly as I should be yours."

He rose quickly and looked down into her face, lovely in the pale light as he never had seen it. . . .

"I thought you understood——"

"I believed that you were ready to understand. I believe it now. Oh, Victor!" Passionate appeal was in her sweet, low voice. . . .

"Charlotte, I love you, and yet you, believing that I love you, ask me to make myself a Judas

to my friends and a turncoat traitor worthless as dirt to my principles? Is that your will?"

"Loving you, I have believed that at last you would count me greater than other friends!" She rose, and faced him, her eyes glittering. . . .

. . . They stood at life's open doorway. Neither could ever forget the moment, or one another. There under the glory of the silver sky, with the peaceful valleys below bathed in light soft as though Heaven had given its glow, they suffered the moment, and each cast the die.

"The land is fair. This land is dear to me. It is my country, even as my honor is my honor," he said; "in not many days we shall know by the will of the people whether America is true to herself. Now,—to-night, you must know, and I must know, if I am true to myself. Charlotte, you might be the wife of Victor Daudet the man. You do not want him?"

"Not unless he places me above all else that dwells beneath the skies!"

He waited a moment, before he could answer; she saw his eyes, and the light in them; saw the look that came upon his face: "One of the greatest of your National heroes said, 'I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.' Charlotte, in all reverence—I only regret that I lose but you, who were to have been my wife."

. . . The light in her own eyes died. . . . Her

voice was hard; "You had best leave me here. I shall stay at the hotel to-night, rather than ride back."

"That, then, would be best. Good-bye."

"You're saying it forever."

"As you will."

Down, down the mountainside he rode in the car, driving with sure, firm hand in the still, cool night of light and shadow.

In the city, where the lights were garish, he drove to the office; left the car there, without going in: walked swiftly to the print shop of David Duncan. There was a light there, a single gleaming light that showed the lined face of the old printer as he was setting up matter—some Preparedness Posters, an appeal to Americans for the week to come.

A smile illumined his face as Victor came to his side.

"Hello, Victor!"

. . . A look strangely like Consecration was upon the face of the Waif from France. He smiled. His eyes flashed. His voice rang:

"Citizen of the Republic, I salute you!"

BOOK V
AFTER

CHAPTER I

THROUGH the turmoil of three tremendous years following the defeat of the Dollar party, the American people began, slowly, to find the American Nation. The forces of right and of equity came to the fore, and fought from a better vantage point. Wise men and great not only kept their heads, but were in a position to use them. We struggled toward that enlightened selfishness which is patriotism. National consciousness was being reborn, because of the accomplishment of at least a degree of National unity. The people were not trusting politicians and their fair promises so blindly as in days of old. The Government without being autocratic, yet was ordered in the interests of justice; with fairness to legitimate enterprise, with scant regard for special privileges that would extort, or political graft.

It is not too much to say that a certain promise of spiritual quality was manifest in the Nation as a whole. A generous people, and a people in

a land so wonderful as ours could not but respond to high leadership, when that leadership was expressed in deeds. Merely partisan politics, and the manner in which such politics met issues of the day or issues of the morrow were shown in bad light when contrasted with practical patriotism; and the people perceived.

Three golden summers had fled in Virginia. The haze on the Blue Ridge, the sweet, soft airs of the Southern mountain country, the stars of night, the light of day, the new growth of the souls of men and women in their emancipation from the very smallest incidentals of human life, and their partial realization of the great, worth-while possibilities—these were woven into the life of the time, into the beauty of the picture.

In Clarmont, better life had come with nobler growth. Materialism, sheer and utter, had characterized the early growth of the little town to the bustling city. But now, in the fifty-seven thousand, you could count seventy and seven times seventy who knew of something greater than cold storage warehouses, factories, and other trivialities.

Of our old friends it is fitting to say a word:—let us call them all our friends. Henry Geiger, fallen heir to the business of his father, had married. If his soul was no greater, at least it was

more tranquil. There's nothing like domesticity to clip a man's claws, and render him more or less affable.

Congressman Carter, now serving his district, and his country as well, was a worthy figure in the National House. Judith had borne him a son. He was happy; his life was filled.

Victor Daudet, Editor-in-Chief of *The Clarmont News*, was making a name for himself in Virginia. He had gone steadily on from sure worth to high attainment, and was reckoned a coming young man of the state. His life had not been without its mighty struggles, its deep regret; no life is, that brings forth good. Perhaps,—yes, surely—he was nobler and better, because of his personal yearning. If in the swift years his life had been filled, yet it had been unfilled. No woman had entered. None could; he had loved too deeply to be satisfied with less. And so, he gave of his wealth of affection; gave to David.

David's old age was a time not of feebleness and wandering retrospect, but rather the serene and steady enjoyment of the world as he found it, and life as it was in the period of earthly existence allotted him still to linger, and to counsel and brighten.

"Victor," said David, looking up from the leading editorial of the morning's *News*, "I guess your

idea in here that the schools of these United States including Virginia are the thing of prime importance is just about right."

"Our schools, ever since the War, have been of greater importance than anything in America. Our first and highest duty is to give education dignity; to pay our teachers,—those who mould the future of America—as fairly at least as a factory superintendent would be paid. We must provide capable teachers, men and women who can teach our children what patriotism is, that it means individual responsibility, and that our Nation lives or dies as its citizens are alive to righteousness, or devoted to dross." Victor's eyes were aglow. The white of his black hair at the temples showed clear, as David fondly, thoughtfully, gazed at him. The fine lines of his face deepened, as he returned David's look of friendship. His shoulders straightened, and he rose to pace the piazza in the spring sunshine that flooded it at eleven in the forenoon.

"You going to speak at the Educational Conference at the University to-night, Victor?"

"Yes, sir. That's why I wrote that editorial last night: it was on my mind."

"There's been a good deal of fussin', and some mussin', in America about our education—tryin' to set it right—hasn't there, Victor?" And David looked ruminatively at the sweeping circle of the

Blue Ridge hills—his eyes came back, and rested on Victor.

"We're not going to stop trying till we find what's wrong, and set it right. It's wonderful. We're progressing."

"Trouble's been, as an old man like me sees it, kinder watchin' an' thinkin', that we've been something like the feller that had a dog that he believed had gone wrong, and decided to get rid of. He tied dynamite to the dog's tail, touched fire to the fuse, and hoped for the best. The dog ran under the feller's house——"

Victor smiled. "It won't do to destroy everything on the landscape: better lay our plans with foresight. That's a good moral—you're always helping me!"

" 'Tain't easy to change the whole world. You can't make folks over all at once—you hitch your wagon to a star, but the star doesn't pull you and your neighbors up there."

"What a never-ending struggle it is—the realization of an ideal."

"You can't, Victor; nobody can."

The young man's face framed a quick question.

"Make the best of things that are," answered David; "just kinder idealize the real——"

"Till the real's all alive with the ideal!"

"Victor, you've said it the way I believe it

ought to be. Every man's work and every man's life ought to be fixed like that."

"Charity, patience; dreaming and working—Life's lesson!"

David's massive frame slowly lifted itself from his great arm-chair—he took Victor's hand in his own, and covered it: "Truth, Son. That's truth." And his face was serenely alight.

CHAPTER II

ON a golden day in April when the sunshine flung its challenge through the skies, a young woman dressed in a simple, clinging gown of brown alighted from the midday train from the East, looked swiftly about her with serious eyes, gazing intently, as though, there in Clarmont, she had come to the end of a long journey, and was content that it was so.

"The blue mountains, the blue mountains!" she softly said. The color of her cheeks deepened; she looked up and into the azure skies; her eyes were like them.

With free poise she stood for a little, apart from the bustle and removed from the depot platform crowd. Far on the mountains above the outskirts of the city were miles upon miles of apple blossoms. Peace, and the beauty of life to be were on the hills. . . .

At length, she signalled a taxi driver. As she rode through the familiar streets there was a

weight in her heart—a feeling that was expectant, stifling, poignant.

. . . Home-comings like these happen in human life; home-comings that might be joyous, but are sadder than the bravest can sometimes bear without unbidden tears. Since Charlotte Burton's father died, she had been abroad,—for almost two years. London, Paris, and the resorts had claimed her for months at a time. She was come again home, to the home where his life had gone out—snuffed like a candle—an illness of a week.

The tears that flowed freely from her eyes as she sat in the silent house—opened and aired by the caretakers only after her unannounced coming—were a daughter's tears of love. And a woman's tears of heart yearning.

She dressed for dinner that night as she had been wont to do for him, and the table was like a ghostly past. . . . She ate a little of the food prepared for her, and went to the music room. The echo from the piano keys reverberated too mournfully for mortal to endure.

That night Charlotte thought, as women immemorially have thought, of the life that was hers—past, and present. The present empty and futile because of the past.

. . . A drifting and pointless life. Cold, lonely; with a future in which showed no roseate light of a dawn—unless——

Yes, her thought was of the man she had lost; lost as completely as she had lost her father——

Unless——

What weakness! For a moment she was close to self-reproach. Why had she wished to come again to Clarmont? Of what avail? Yet visions rose before her. A clean, clear face, with serious, searching eyes was all the time in the vision, whether she willed it or no.

After a little she found herself wondering what her life alone would be. Alone . . . always alone . . . there was, or might be, possibly one future which could make life better; a life with a child in it.—A life with her child in it? Fancy wove a dream. And then—she realized something. Now she knew. She wished that she might have a son who should be such a man as his father. . . . She kneeled upon the rug before the deep chair from which she had risen, and prayed . . . there was only a sentence in her prayer. It was the same sentence that has gone to God from millions of his creatures—"Help me."

A half hour before midnight the telephone at Victor Daudet's office desk rang, as it had rung a hundred times and more since early evening.

"Yes."

"Yes."

"I—it seems incredible—I——"

"Yes."

"I am at your service."

"Certainly."

"To-night?—Now?"

"In not many minutes."

"Yes."

Charlotte stood on the portico when Victor reached her home; like a flash he remembered the last night he had seen her standing there, clad like a queen in her beauty.

She greeted him: "Thank you, thank you, Victor, for coming." Her voice had a clear, sweet timbre; and a something in it he could not fathom. It was like her voice of other days, yet unlike. . . .

"I'm glad to have come, since you ask——" He felt that he could not say what he wished . . . something held him tense. . . . She led the way within, to the little room off the library, where she turned on another of the overhead lights, and said, "Victor, if you will, you're to sit in this chair; and I want to sit"—she suited her movement to the words—"just here." She drew a little low rocker, and faced him.

Color came softly into her cheeks. She began speaking in a voice which stole to his inner heart: "Once, Victor, I was dear to you. Always, you've been dear to me. . . . I was hard and cold, and I didn't know. I've suffered. I've paid for my

sin; for my pride and selfishness. Life isn't what I thought it was. Life is nothing unless you love. You were too noble for me——”

—“I wasn't, Charlotte—I was only——”

—“You raised an ideal of me that I couldn't reach—it was too like yourself in its exalted honor——”

“Charlotte! I pray you, don't, don't! I only did what I knew I must do——”

“Because you were you!” she said; her voice rang with pride.

She looked into his eyes: “Victor, I've learned my lesson. In the learning I have conceived an ideal of you. And that ideal, to-day, when I knew you were close, reached this; that you are big enough to hear me say I was wrong, unspeakably wrong, unalterably wrong, and yet you would rather that I did not say it. I say it with all my heart. And you—will forgive. Perhaps you cannot forget. Perhaps I've cut you too deep. It is my just reward if I have from you only forgiveness, never love. . . .”

His hand took hers. . . .

His eyes were wet, as he drew her to him . . . her warm, sweet arms he placed about himself . . . and kissed her.

“Charlotte!”

“My Dear!”

“God is good.”

The resonant strokes of twelve came from the clock in the hallway.

He rose, drew her to him, pressed her lips once more upon his—"It's been so long—days—nights, they've all been long, since I lost you. Now you're mine!"

"To guide and keep and teach—Oh, Victor, you *have* taught me—you've taught me forever!"

He placed his hands upon her shoulders, and looked into her shining eyes, with a quick, unerring thought in his own: "Charlotte, I'd like you to go with me to see David. To-night! *Now?*"

"David? Yes——"

"David Duncan!"

"Yes."

"Do you *want* to go?"

"To the end of the world, if you asked it——"

He covered her eyes with kisses. . . .

"Please—just a moment—I need a hat and wrap that's upstairs!"

He stepped to the telephone, and called David, who often waited up for Victor's home-coming.

Through the still, cool streets they went, her arm within his as they swiftly walked.

The big man appeared oddly calm; strangely at ease, quite serene, when they came in: "Some sort of news, I guess; what is it, Victor?"

—"You recall Miss Burton, of course."

“Well—yes!”

Victor turned to her—saw the wonderful light in her eyes. . . . “Charlotte, we’re thinking of being married, to-morrow, aren’t we?”

Her eyes shone yet more wonderfully—“Yes.”

David held forth his hands to them both: “I kinder thought—I kinder thought, a long time ago, that it ought to be that way!”

THE END

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

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